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EDUCATION AND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

MEXICO
by Alberto Hernandez Medina
and Carlos Muñoz Izquierdo

SOUTH ASIA
by Manzoor Ahmed

STUDIES PREPARED FOR THE
CARNEGIE COUNCIL ON POLICY STUDIES
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Mexico

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A Series of Special Studies

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Foreword

This is one of seven publications presenting studies commissioned by the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education as a means of providing a global perspective for education and youth employment in contemporary societies. The remaining publications will be concerned with education and youth employment in Belgium, by Henry Janne; Japan, by Hidetoshi Kato; Poland, by Barbara Liberska; Great Britain, by Stuart Maclure; Sweden and Denmark, by Gösta Rehn and K. Helveg Petersen, respectively; and the Federal Republic of Germany, by Klaus von Dohnanyi. Margaret M. Gordon, associate director of the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, is the general editor of the series. To the authors of these studies, and to Alberto Hernández Medina and Carlos Muñoz Izquierdo, whose work appears in this volume, we express our deep appreciation.

The German Marshall Fund generously provided support for two international conferences on education and youth employment which were attended by several of the authors of studies for this series and which have contributed significantly to the Council's deliberations on this subject. The International Council for Educational Development, under the direction of James A. Perkins, coordinated the conferences and arranged for the participation of the essayists. Pablo Latapi, Director, Prospectiva Universitaria, A. C. Mexico, served as coordinator and adviser on the essay on youth education and employment in Mexico. We acknowledge all of these contributions with profound thanks.

We also wish to extend our thanks to Mary Pernell Frederick and Diana Lorentz for their editorial contributions, and Sylvia Zuck for coordinating manuscript preparation.

CLARK KERR
Chairman
Carnegie Council on Policy Studies
in Higher Education

Part One

Mexico

by Alberto Hernández Medina and
Carlos Muñoz Izquierdo

1

Mexico in Perspective

Mexico in 1977

Mexico's economic progress between 1940 and 1970 was an admirable example of economic growth, though the achievement of social goals was not so remarkable. The economic problem became acute during the 1970s with accelerated inflation, as can be seen by studying minimum wage levels since 1964 (Table I-1). The crisis arrived in 1976 and reached panic levels during the last four months of that year.

Will Mexico recover? Today there is a confident feeling that "we can do it." President Lopez Portillo has inspired confidence, both by promising much-needed honesty in the bureaucracy and by making a personal commitment to take the country out of chaos. Workers as well as industrialists have declared their support for the new president. President Carter has also indicated a personal interest in Mexico's recovery.

The government, industrialists, and market analysts all agree that Mexico can extricate itself from the "Echeverría pothole" by the end of 1978, but much depends on whether the president is resolute in carrying out massive readjustments in the bureaucracy, thus inspiring public confidence; on whether industrialists and labor unions are firmly determined to climb out of the "pothole"; and on whether United States authorities are willing to help wholeheartedly through tourism.

Table I.1. Minimum wages in the Federal District, in current pesos,[a] 1964 to 1977

Year	*Daily wage*	*Monthly wage*
1964–1965	21.50	645.00
1966–1967	25.00	750.00
1968–1969	28.25	847.50
1970–1971	32.00	960.00
1972–August 1973	38.00	1,140.00
September 1973–December 1973	44.85	1,345.00
January 1974–September 1974	52.00	1,560.00
October 1974–December 1975	63.40	1,902.00
January 1976–September 1976	78.60	2,358.00
October 1976–December 1976	96.70	2,901.00
January 1977	106.40	3,192.00

[a] In September 1976, the peso was devalued.

SOURCE: Mexico, National Commission on Minimum Wages (Comision Nacional de Salarios Mínimos).

capital investments, "Good Neighbor Policies," and so forth. The fact that Mexico has much-needed petroleum also cannot be ignored. In short, the solution will come from two sources: *strong will* by some and *good will* by others. The special responsibility of the president of Mexico will be to make skillful use of these two kinds of will power.

The Mexican Labor Market

The problems of youths in the labor market can best be understood if we first consider the structure of the Mexican labor market.

Industrial distribution of the labor force. According to the population census of 1970 nearly 40 percent of the Mexican labor force was engaged in agriculture and related activities (the primary sector), about 23 percent was engaged in manufacturing and other production (secondary sector), and about 32 percent was in trade and service (tertiary sector) (see Table I-2). Changes since 1969 have not been very significant, except in special cases such as the bureaucracy, which numbered about 407,000 in 1969 and increased to more than 700,000 by the end of 1976.

Table I-2. Occupational distribution of the economically active population in Mexico 1969[a]

Type of activity	*Number (thousands)*	*Percentage*
Primary sector (agriculture and livestock, silviculture, hunting, and fishing)	5,133.5	39.5
Secondary sector (petroleum, mining, manufacturing, electricity, construction)	2,973.5	22.9
Tertiary sector (merchandizing, transportation, services, government)	4,130.5	31.8
Unspecified	747.5	5.8

[a] Total population: 48,225.2. Economically active population: 12,985.1 (26.9% of total population).

SOURCE: Mexico, *Ninth General Census of Population*, 1970, p. 597.

The fact that Mexico still has almost 40 percent of its labor force occupied in the primary sector labels it as a strongly agricultural country. However, the distribution of the labor force is not uniform throughout the country. Table I-3 indicates the variation among four of the nine regions which differ markedly in the distribution of activity among the major economic sectors. At one extreme is the central region, with a preponderance of the work force in industry; at the opposite extreme is the southern region, which is heavily agricultural.

Employment and underemployment in Mexico. Unemployment in Mexico is not a new problem. It can be said that it has always existed and that in recent years it has become more acute. What

Table I-3. Distribution of the economically active population among major economic sectors in Mexico, by selected region 1969

Region	*Primary sector*	*Secondary sector*	*Tertiary sector*	*Unspecified*
Center	10.8%	35.4%	48.8%	5.0%
North	31.7	26.3	36.3	5.7
South Center	53.1	19.3	21.7	5.9
South	69.2	10.1	15.0	5.7

SOURCE: Mexico, *Ninth General Census of Population, 1970.*

are the causes? In recent decades, Mexico has had an annual population growth rate of 3.5 percent, which means that the population doubles every 25 years. It is increasingly difficult, because of shortages of capital for investment, to create new jobs for all of the new entrants into the labor force.

In addition, urban centers have been invaded by people from rural areas, which are characterized by low productivity and declining yields. A typical example is the family with a small tract of land to farm. At first the yield is adequate, but the family grows and the same land must feed more mouths. The children must emigrate because the land will no longer support them all. The cities are crowded with farm people looking for work, as illustrated by Table I-4, which shows how the proportion of the labor force engaged in agriculture has declined since 1940 and, more important, how the contribution of agriculture to the Gross National Product (GNP) has declined.

Luis Unikel (1976, pp. 85–86) has conducted an interesting migration survey. He calls cities in which immigrants account for more than 5 percent of the population "cities of attraction"; "cities in equilibrium" are those in which the proportions of emigrants or immigrants range between +5 percent and –5 percent; and "cities of rejection" are those that lose more than 5 percent of their population through emigration (see Table I-5). The northern cities have exercised the greatest attraction between 1940 and 1970. Obviously the growth of the cities of attraction has not been at the expense of the cities of rejection, but is attributable mainly to the exodus from the countryside.

"Open unemployment," that is, the number of jobless persons who claim to be looking for work, was relatively low in 1969, with a national average rate of 3.8 percent of the labor force. There were, however, substantial variations among regions (Table I-6). We can observe here the impact of rural emigration: the three economically strongest regions (Center, Northeast, and North) are precisely the ones with higher rates of people looking for work—either because they are industrially developed or have highly mechanized agriculture.

Table I-4. Percentage of the economically active population of Mexico engaged in agriculture and share of agriculture in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) 1940 to 1970

Year	*Economically active population in agriculture*	*Share of agriculture in GDP*
1940	65.4%	22.6%
1950	58.3	22.5
1960	54.1	18.8
1970	41.1	11.6

SOURCE: Unikel (1976, pp. 187–188).

Table I-5. Cities of attraction, cities in equilibrium, and cities of rejection, 1940 to 1970

Period	*Cities of attraction*	*Cities in equilibrium*	*Cities of rejection*
1940–1950	60	11	12
1950–1960	72	27	22
1960–1970	180	40	46

SOURCE: Unikel (1976, p. 88).

Table I-6. Number and percentage of persons classified as "open unemployed,"[a] by region, 1969

Region	*Number (thousands)*	*Percentage of economically active population*
Total	485.2	3.8
Center	155.1	4.9
Northeast	47.2	4.6
North	72.5	4.0
Pacific	46.2	3.1
Gulf of Mexico	32.4	2.7
South-Center	69.1	3.5
North-Center	24.0	3.7
Yucatan	7.5	2.5
South	31.1	2.4

[a] The "open unemployed" are jobless persons who claim to be looking for work.

SOURCE: Mexico, *Ninth General Census of Population, 1970.*

Underemployment is a very serious problem in the Mexican labor market and includes (1) people partially occupied during some months of the year, (2) underpaid workers, and (3) people engaged in the "informal labor market" (see below).

"Visible underemployment" is the classification for workers who are idle at least three months of the year and encompasses a full 20 percent of the labor force. If we divide this number by four, to approximate a yearly rate, we add another 5 percent to the total unemployment rate. Numbers and percentages of those in the category in the various regions are shown in Table I-7.

Table I-7. Number and percentage of persons "visibly underemployed,"[a] by region, 1969

Region	*Number (thousands)*	*Percentage of economically active population*
Total	2,464.2	19.0
Center	553.1	17.2
Northeast	168.0	25.9
North	387.5	21.5
Pacific	328.2	21.7
Gulf of Mexico	190.1	15.9
South-Center	368.6	18.9
North-Center	136.9	21.7
Yucatan	22.1	7.4
South	209.2	16.0

[a] The "visibly underemployed" are persons who work nine months a year or less.

SOURCE: Mexico, *Ninth General Census of Population, 1970.*

Another employment classification is the "informal market" (or "unformal" labor market, as some prefer to call it). Some authors use income levels as the criterion for identifying this group; others prefer to define it in terms of the social origins of the persons constituting it; still others use the class of work performed or the kind of establishment in which it is observed. Some authors prefer a composite of all these approaches (see Sethuraman, 1976).

For our purposes, and in the view of a number of scholars of Latin America, we may describe those seeking work in the informal market in Mexico as persons with little formal schooling and no social status who tend to exclude themselves from better paying work on account of their poor, sickly, and defeated attitude. They can find work only in small factory workshops, at low wages, without legal protection of their rights, and are exposed to harsh and unsanitary working conditions. Alternatively, they engage in such uncomplicated activities as shoeshining, gardening, car washing, and street vending. Frequently shifting from one such activity to another, they will work at anything but have no real marketable skills. Their income is generally below the minimum wage level and is very irregular.

The percentage of this informal work sector is similar and consistent in all Latin American cities. Souza and Tokman (1976) have found that it encompasses an average of around 50 percent of the total work force in various Latin American cities (Table I-8) and that 70 to 80 percent of the immigrants to these cities join the ranks of the informal sector. The reason is that this secondary labor market acts as a reservoir of unskilled labor which can regulate the rise and fall of levels in the primary market. This secondary market supplies additional workers in times of expansion and retains surplus workers in times of retrenchment. The primary market, in turn, accepts the most qualified workers and rejects the poorest—very convenient from management's point of view.

Table I-8. Percentage of the economically active population classified as in the "informal sector," five Latin American cities, 1974 to 1975

City	*Percentage of the economically active population in the "informal sector"*
Asuncion, Paraguay	57
Guayaquil, Ecuador	48
Quito, Ecuador	48
San Salvador, El Salvador	46
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic	50
Average	50

SOURCE: Souza and Tokman (1976, p. 69).

One yardstick for measuring underemployment used by other Latin American countries has been the practice of considering as underemployed all those who report earnings less than the minimum wage. As is well known, in Mexico the minimum wage is a subsistence wage. To earn less is to belong to the most underpaid sector—generally the result of low productivity of an activity.

The 1970 census provides information on the percentage of the labor force with some reported income who received less than the minimum wage. On the basis of a sample of 20 percent of the Mexican states, the portions receiving less than the minimum wage varied from 85 percent in agriculture and livestock to 23 percent in transportation (see Table I-9). It must be borne in mind that almost 40 percent of the labor force is engaged in agriculture and livestock raising; thus the 85 percent figure is highly significant. The fact that 60 or 70 percent of the population earns so little has kept industry from developing more, simply because the "customer market" is restricted to the remaining 30 percent of the population.

These figures on open unemployment, visible unemployment, the informal sector, and people earning less than the minimum wage give an idea of the extent of underemployment. Naturally, there is some overlapping of percentages, so it is not possible to calculate exact figures for the overall underemployment rate.

Table I-9. Percentage of labor force[a] with reported income below minimum wage, from a selected sample of 20 percent of Mexican States, by industry group, 1969

Industry group	*Percentage below minimum wage*
Agriculture and livestock	85.5
Extractive industries	38.2
Manufacturing	43.3
Construction	41.3
Transportation	22.8
Services	43.7

[a] From a selected sample of 20 percent of Mexican states.

SOURCE: Mexico, *Ninth General Census of Population, 1970.*

The industrial structure of Mexico. At one end of Mexico's industrial spectrum are a great number of small workshops operating with little capital, paying very low wages, and having low productivity. At the other extreme is "big industry," highly technical and well-organized, with heavy capital investment and large-scale production, paying much higher wages. This disparity is shown in Table I-10. Capital investment per person in small-scale industry is only 9.1 percent of that for "big business" (first and last lines of Table I-10, respectively). Similarly, the value added (by manufacturing) of small businesses is only 13.9 percent of that for "big business."

Table I-10. Wages, value added, and capital investment per person in industrial enterprises, by gross value[a] of their total production, 1970

Value of annual production (thousands of pesos)	*Average annual earnings of wage earners*	*Average annual salary of salaried employees*	*Value added per person*	*Capital investment per person*
1,500 or less	8,885	16,046	15,279	13,562
1,501–5,000	11,720	27,990	31,611	31,900
5,001–20,000	13,445	35,746	43,698	44,365
20,001–50,000	14,726	38,974	55,012	67,293
50,001–100,000	17,186	43,002	67,652	92,275
100,001 or more	22,288	49,094	109,692	149,306

[a] In 1970, the exchange rate of the peso was 12.50 pesos per U.S. dollar. All amounts are in pesos except for column 1, which gives amounts in thousands of pesos.

SOURCE: Mexico, *Ninth Industrial Census, 1971*, Vol. I, p. 5.

Turning to the number of workers employed by industrial enterprises, we find that there were barely 200 companies in 1970 that employed more than 750 workers each (Table I-11). (Note the large number of nonremunerated personnel—about 92,000). Establishments with fewer than five workers accounted for almost 63 percent of those paying wages (those that do not pay wages averaging 1.6 workers). At the other end of the scale, the five largest groups of establishments accounted for only 2.6 percent of all establishments, although they employed 50.5 percent of the wage earners.

Table I-11. Number of industrial establishments and their total personnel, by number of employees per establishment, 1970

Number of employees per establishment	*Number of establishments*	*Total personnel (thousands)*	*Percentage of establishments*	*Percentage of personnel*
All establishments	62,395	1,489.3	100.0	100.0
Fewer than 6	39,222	107.0	62.9	7.2
6–15	10,959	98.7	17.6	6.6
16–25	3,329	66.5	5.3	4.5
26–50	3,532	126.6	5.7	8.5
51–75	1,582	97.6	2.6	6.6
76–100	910	79.3	1.5	5.3
101–175	1,217	161.8	2.0	10.9
176–250	579	121.4	0.9	8.2
251–350	366	108.4	0.6	7.3
351–500	287	119.2	0.5	8.0
501–750	200	120.7	0.3	8.1
751 and more	212	282.1	0.3	18.9

SOURCE: Mexico, *Ninth Industrial Census, 1971*, Vol. 1, p. 149.

Despite these statistics, Mexican industry is rapidly becoming modernized. Trejo Reves (1973) estimated that establishments with 50 or more workers accounted for 42 percent of the wage earners in 1960 and 51 percent in 1965. Table I-11 indicates that by 1970 these establishments accounted for 73 percent of industrial wage earners. The speed with which modern industry is displacing the traditional pattern of employing fewer than 50 workers has caused problems: industry has not been able to absorb all the workers available. In particular, we know that the industrial expansion of 1960–1970 averaged around 10 percent a year, while the absorption of labor during the 1960s occurred at an annual average rate of only 5.5 percent (Banco Nacional de Comercio Exterior, 1973). The reason is simple: modern industry saves manual labor, and that is precisely what is most undesirable in a country with an almost unlimited supply of labor (Lewis, 1960).

Another feature of the Mexican labor force is that young people begin work at the age of 12, in contrast with many other countries where they begin at 14, 16, or 18 years of age. This fact, along with an annual population growth rate of 3.5 percent, aggravates all other problems of employment. If young people would stay in school longer, the pressure on jobs would be lessened, and they would be better prepared for entering the labor market. However, necessity forces children of poor families to go to work while quite young. Because of their large numbers, the younger age groups (12- and 13-year-olds) are very important. The rapid growth rate of youth cohorts from 1960 to 1970 is indicated in Table I-12.

Table I-12. Age distribution of youths and annual rate of increase in Mexico, 1960 and 1970

Age	*1960 (thousands)*	*1970 (thousands)*	*Average annual rate of increase, 1960-70*
12	949.0	1,365.1	3.7%
13	814.8	1,198.8	3.9
14	808.0	1,194.8	4.0
15	753.7	1,101.1	3.9
16	703.1	1,018.6	3.8
17	703.2	1,032.6	3.9
18	798.6	1,056.3	2.9

SOURCE: Mexico, *Seventh General Census of Population, 1960*, pp. 74 and 76; and *Ninth General Census of Population, 1970*, p. 37.

Military service. Service in the armed forces has practically no effect on the education or employment of Mexican youths, who are obliged to enter the service at the age of 18 but can do so without interrupting their studies or work by drilling on Saturday afternoons or Sunday mornings.

We now turn our attention more directly to the matter of education and employment of youths, dealing especially with the deficient educational level of most young people, the economic problems of working youths, the maladjustment between school dropouts and the labor market, and the inescapable problem of education and social status. We will touch, though not deeply, the social problems of today's youths. And finally we will mention the remedies that have been applied to improve the employment situation of young people in Mexico. Though precise and abundant statistics such as those obtainable in developed countries are, unfortunately, not available, there is nevertheless considerable information to illustrate the essentials of the problem.

2

Youth in Mexico

Education of Mexican Youth

According to Article 16 of the Federal Law of Education of 1973, which is still in effect, "primary education (grades 1 to 6) is obligatory for all the inhabitants of the Republic." However, no specific age is established for compulsory education. Although Article 31 of the Mexican Constitution requires all citizens to "ensure that their children or wards younger than 15 years shall attend private or public schools in order to receive elementary and military education," the government has not been able to meet the demand for primary education. According to the 1970 census, 33.5 percent of children aged 6 to 14 were not attending primary school. (According to the Ministry of Education, however, it was only 21 percent; Medellín and Izquierdo, 1973, p. 48).

A more serious problem is the high percentage of dropouts. In developed countries, the numbers of young people 20 to 24 years old participating in higher education are substantial—nearly 24 percent, on the average, for developed countries and 48 percent in the United States in 1970 (UNESCO, 1972)[1] In contrast, in Mexico the respective enrollment was 3.5 percent for the period 1959 to 1970. Table I-13 shows how the percentages enrolled decline drastically as the cohorts advance through the age scale. The rate of dropouts at the primary level is frightening: in the years 1955–1966, 82.8 percent failed to complete the sixth grade. Only 6.9 percent of those entering the first grade of the primary level completed secondary school. In 1966, the percentage was up to 8.5 percent, but this means that only 6.9 percent were more or less ready to enter the industrial labor force.

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[1] These enrollment rates are derived by dividing the total number of students enrolled in higher education by the population aged 20 to 24. The results can be misleading where, as in the United States, a substantial proportion of students are aged 18 to 19. The actual percentage of persons aged 20 to 24 enrolled in the United States is considerably smaller than the UNESCO data indicate, and this is also true for certain other countries.

Table I-13. Enrollment in school and college in Mexico, selected levels, 1955–66 and 1959–70

	1955–66		*1959–70*	
Level	*Number (thousands)*	*Percentage of age group*	*Number (thousands)*	*Percentage of age group*
1st primary	1,465.6	100.0%	1,990.2	100.0%
Graduates from 6th grade	252.1	17.2	449.8	22.6
1st secondary	131.3	8.9	231.5	11.6
3rd secondary	102.2	7.0	170.0	8.5
1st preparatory	59.7	4.1	85.5	4.3
2nd preparatory	48.5	3.3	77.9	3.9
1st college	43.3	2.9	69.8	3.5
5th college				0.8[a]

[a] 1976.

SOURCE: Mexico, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, continuous statistics.

Muñoz Izquierdo (1973) has estimated the flow of those who leave school either by dropping out or by graduation (Table I-14). If we wish to obtain a more comprehensive view of all the current educational deficiencies in Mexico, we must also consider those who are completely illiterate plus those who finished primary school and did not finish secondary school. Graduation from secondary school is considered a desirable cutoff point for Mexicans. Hence those who left school at a lower level have a deficient education and are considered the "potential audience" for adult education. The startling facts of the situation are revealed in the following figures (Ministry of Public Education, 1973):

Total Mexican population	59,763,800	
Illiterates	6,193,800	
Did not finish primary school	11,958,300	
Did not finish secondary school	9,154,300	
Total with deficient education	27,306,200	(45.7% of total)

These figures do not take into account children four years old or younger (8,949,000 children).

Table I-14. Withdrawals from school in Mexico, 1960 to 1970

		Withdrawal percentages		
Grade	*Number (thousands)*	*Total*	*Males*	*Females*
Total	9,747.0	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
1–3	3,952.0	40.6	38.5	43.0
4–5	1,819.0	18.7	18.9	19.6
6	815.9	8.4	8.1	8.7
7–8	1,680.5	17.2	17.5	17.0
9	679.7	7.0	7.2	6.7
10–12	452.2	4.6	5.6	3.4
13 or more	347.7	3.6	5.2	1.6

SOURCE: Muñoz Izquierdo and Lobo (1974, p. 154).

The amount of education received by young Mexicans can also be examined by the various age groups. As can be seen in Table I-15, the younger generations have had more schooling. The most remarkable increase is in primary school, with a rise from 59.5 percent for those currently aged 20 to 24 to 76.1 percent for those in the 10 to 14 age group. However, there is still a total of almost 20 percent of young people with no schooling at all. This is serious, since each group numbers in the millions. The total number of young people between 10 and 20 without any schooling is about 3.1 million, and they constitute a completely unskilled work force.

There are no satisfactory short-range solutions for the problems of education in all their harsh reality. The share of the

Table I-15. Educational attainment of youths in Mexico by age group, 1970

Age group	Total (thousands)	Educational Attainment: None	Some primary	Some post-primary[a]
10–14	6,396.2	19.0%	76.2%	4.8%
15–19	5,054.4	18.4	60.7	20.9
20–24	4,032.3	22.5	59.6	17.9

[a] Secondary schooling ends at 15–16 years.

SOURCE: Mexico, *Ninth General Census of Population, 1970*, p. 299.

federal budget earmarked for education is already very large, but demographic pressures continue to exacerbate the problem. The Lopez Portillo administration has announced a "National Plan of Education" that hopes to remedy the deficiencies, and people are beginning slowly to respond to the government's appeals. But the prospects are not very promising.

Youth in the Labor Force[2]

Despite the fact that many young people enter the labor force at the age of 12, the actual percentages of boys and girls 12 to 14 in the labor force (or economically active population) are quite small–15.5 percent of boys and 7.6 percent of girls (Table I-16). Among those 15 to 19, as would be expected, the percentages are considerably larger–52.2 percent of young men and 23.9 percent of young women. The lower percentages for women in this age group are largely explained by early marriage or unpaid family work. Among those in the labor force in the entire 12 to 19 age group, 94 percent are employed, indicating that they are fully incorporated in the labor force. However, the percentage of men who are employed is appreciably higher than women, since in Mexico women find it much harder than men to obtain work.

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[2] The term *youth* refers to young people between the ages of 12 and 19. Many children enter the labor force at 12, and 19 has been chosen as the upper age limit because few people go on to college (3.5 percent of the total) and only 0.8 percent of these graduate. (A large portion of college students work as well.) Thus the great majority of young people are ready for adult work by the age of 20.

The "open unemployment" rates shown in Table I-16 are greater for young people than for the population in general (6.0 percent for ages 12 to 19 compared with 3.8 percent for the entire labor force). Under equal circumstances, young people tend to feel more keenly the impact of a rise in unemployment. The unemployment rate for the younger group, ages 12 to 14, is lower than for those in the 15 to 19 age group, because the simple tasks performed by the younger people give them more mobility in seeking work.

Table I-16. Labor force and employment status of youths in Mexico by age and sex, 1970

	Age		
Sex	*12–14*	*15–19*	*Total*
Total			
Population	3,758,700	5,054,400	8,813,800
Percentage in labor force (economically active)	11.6%	37.4%	26.4%
Percentage of labor force employed	94.8	93.9	94.0
Percentage of labor force unemployed	5.2	6.1	6.0
Men			
Population	1,917,300	2,491,000	4,408,300
Percentage in labor force	15.5%	52.2%	36.2%
Percentage of labor force employed	95.8	94.7	94.9
Percentage of labor force unemployed	4.2	5.3	5.1
Women			
Population	1,841,400	2,563,400	4,404,800
Percentage in labor force	7.6%	23.9%	16.6%
Percentage of labor force employed	92.7	92.0	92.2
Percentage of labor force unemployed	7.3	8.0	7.8

SOURCE: Mexico, *Ninth General Census of Population, 1970.*

The Economically Inactive Population

Among young people, those who are economically inactive consist of domestic workers, students, and others (Table I-17). (The inclusion of domestic workers distinguishes the Mexican concept of "economically inactive" persons from that of the United States and most developed countries, who consider domestic workers to be employed.) About 50 percent are students, 34 percent are domestic workers, and 16 percent are in other categories. As might be expected, a large percentage of those engaged in domestic work are young girls, chiefly in the 15 to 19 age group. The fact that 2.2 million young persons of both sexes work at domestic labor is a clear sign of underemployment and unemployment. Also notable is that among students in the 15 to 19 age group, 54 percent of the males and only about 23 percent of the females are students.

Simultaneous Work and Study (12 to 19 years)

Until recently it has been impossible to know how many students were also working. This has finally been achieved with the cooperation of the economically active population and through

Table I-17. Status of economically inactive youths in Mexico by sex and age group, 1970

Activity and age group	*Number (thousands)*	*Percentage of economically inactive population*		
		Total	*Males*	*Females*
Total economically inactive population[a]	6,484.9	100.0	100.0	100.0
Domestic workers	2,205.7	34.0	5.3	56.0
12–14	713.2	21.5	3.7	38.4
15–19	1,492.5	47.2	7.4	71.2
Students	3,245.5	50.0	65.2	38.5
12–14	2,162.4	65.1	73.6	56.9
15–19	1,083.1	34.2	53.7	22.5
Others	1,033.7	15.9	29.5	5.5
12–14	446.9	13.5	22.6	4.7
15–19	586.8	18.5	38.9	6.3

[a] Subtotals may not add to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: Mexico, *Ninth General Census of Population, 1970.*

the examination of school registrations. The resulting data (Table I-18) are extremely interesting: 835,000 students work, and 9.5 percent of the students in the 12 to 14 age group and 36.0 percent of students 15 to 19 hold jobs. Even more significant is that those who both study and work constitute about 52 percent of the economically active population 12 to 14 years old and 32 percent of those 15 to 19. These students work either in the mornings or in the afternoons. At the college level, the "sandwich pattern" in which they attend classes three to four hours in the early morning and another two to three hours in the late afternoon, with their work schedule falling in the middle of the day is preferred.

In his survey of the labor market for economists, Jose

Table I-18. Working and nonworking students in the youth population of Mexico by sex and age group, 1970

Activity and age group	*Total*	*Males*	*Females*
	Number of students (thousands)		
Economically active population	2,328.2	1,596.6	731.5
12–14	436.1	296.6	139.4
15–19	1,892.1	1,300.0	592.1
Students (registered in the educational system)	4,080.5	2,256.0	1,824.5
12–14	2,388.1	1,289.2	1,098.9
15–19	1,692.4	966.8	725.6
School only	3,245.5	1,833.1	1,412.4
12–14	2,162.4	1,193.6	968.8
15–19	1,083.1	639.5	443.6
School and work	835.0	422.9	412.1
12–14	225.7	95.6	130.1
15–19	609.3	327.3	282.0
	Percentages		
Of students who work	20.5	18.8	22.6
12–14	9.5	7.4	11.8
15–19	36.0	33.9	38.9
Of the economically active population who are students	35.8	26.5	56.1
12–14	51.8	32.2	93.3
15–19	32.2	25.2	47.6

SOURCE: Mexico, *Ninth General Census of Population, 1970.*

Angel Pescador (1976, p. 17) has calculated the precise stages at which university students begin to work. About one-half begin work in the first year at the university, and smaller percentages begin work in each of the following years. By the time of graduation, 94 percent of the students work. The great majority of the working students (about 72 percent) are from lower-class families, and the others are from middle-class families. Students from upper-class families evidently do not work.

Many teachers and institutions complain that university students are not productive in their studies owing to worry about their jobs. However, few countries have managed as well as Mexico to combine theory with practice, for students try to obtain jobs that are related to what they are studying. In addition, university students tend to work so that they can later get jobs more easily. Pescador (1976) reports that 43 percent declared that their first professional job was in the same establishment where they had worked part time as students.

When we consider the levels of education in which young people are enrolled, we find, surprisingly, that 50 percent of the 15 to 19 age group are enrolled at the primary level (Table I-19). However, a good sign for this age group is that 9.3 percent are receiving vocational training and 4.7 percent are studying at the subprofessional level. This indicates that young people today want to study even beyond the normal age and that they are trying more than ever before to obtain direct training in work skills.

Table I-19. Distribution of the student population ages 12 to 19 among educational levels, 1970

Educational level	*Ages 12 to 19*	*Ages 15 to 19*
Total students	100.0%	100.0%
Primary	60.4	50.0
Vocational	4.4	9.3
Secondary	25.2	29.3
Preparatory	6.3	5.4
Subprofessional	2.3	4.7
College	1.4	1.3

SOURCE: Mexico, *Ninth General Census of Population, 1970.*

Maladjustment Between the School Population and the Labor Market

When we examine what happens to students after leaving school, we find that the labor market cannot properly accommodate all those young persons who sooner or later terminate their studies and want to work.

The federal government has made strong efforts to expand middle (secondary) education both at the basic level (seventh, eighth, and ninth grades) and at the upper (superior) level (tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades) by providing some optional alternative study courses as well as vocational education. The real purpose of this effort has been to provide a better educated labor force. In the past, the government devoted its best efforts to expanding primary education, but today there is strong social pressure to provide more educational opportunities for the middle grades as well.

The high growth rates at all levels of middle schooling are shown in Table I-20. Particularly noteworthy is the jump of 23.5 percent between 1970 and 1974 at the secondary level (superior cycle–systematic education). Unfortunately, the figures for vocational training continue to be low and show relatively slow growth. However, educational expansion as a whole has produced a great increase in the educational attainments of young people, as Table I-21 shows. The increase also shows up clearly in the rise in the educational attainment of the total economically active population (Table I-22). Especially remarkable have been the increases in those who have completed six years and ten or more years of school, respectively.

The problem of absorption of labor is not a question of more or less education among the population but of the inability of both public and private investment sources to create new jobs for all cohorts terminating their lives as students. Demographic pressures are stronger than the capacity for new investments, and the disparity is cumulative over time. In addition, technical progress and the modernization of Mexican industry tend toward labor-saving processes. All of these factors make the absorption rate seriously insufficient (see Table I-23). Of

Table I-20. Numbers and increases in enrollments in middle-grade education in Mexico, by level and type, 1959 to 1974
Numbers (thousands) and increases

Level and type	*1959*	*1964*	*Annual average rate of growth*	*1970*	*Annual average rate of growth*	*1974*	*Annual average rate of growth*
Basic cycle (grades 7, 8, and 9)	277.6	583.2	16.0%	1,208.3	12.9%	1,798.0	10.5%
Systematic education (including curricula with terminal options)	174.5	431.1	19.8	1,027.3	15.6	1,613.2	11.9
Nonsystematic education (vocational only)	103.1	152.1	8.1	181.0	2.9	184.8	0.5
Superior cycle (grades 10, 11, and 12)	93.2	165.6	12.2	325.5	11.9	680.0	20.2
Systematic education (including curricula with terminal options)	50.5	97.1	14.0	232.8	15.6	542.1	23.5
Nonsystematic education (vocational only)	42.7	68.5	9.9	92.7	5.2	137.9	10.4
Grand total	370.8	748.8	15.1	1,533.8	12.2	2,478.0	12.7

SOURCE: Mexico, Ministry of Industry and Commerce and Ministry of Public Education, continuous statistics.

Table I-21. Enrollment rates of youths, ages 12 to 19 in Mexico, 1959 to 1975

Year	*Population ages 12 to 19 (1) (thousands)*	*School registrations (2) (thousands)*	*(2) ÷ (1)*	*Annual average rate of growth*	
				Population, ages 12 to 19	*School registrations*
1959	5,859.4	1,369.4	23.4%		
1964	7,125.6	2,350.5	33.0	4.0%	11.4%
1970	8,813.1	4,080.5	46.3	3.6	9.6
1975	11,124.7	6,329.0	56.9	4.8	9.2

SOURCE: Population data from Mexico, *Ninth General Census of Population, 1970*, and from projections of the Banco de Mexico; school registration data from Ministry of Industry and Commerce and Ministry of Public Education, continuous statistics.

Table I-22. Distribution of economically active population in Mexico by years of school completed, 1960 and 1970

Years of school completed	*Percentage of economically active population*	
	1960	*1970*
0	36.0	27.1
1–3	31.9	30.6
4–5	11.4	11.5
6	12.7	17.8
7–8	1.6	2.1
10–12	2.2	4.1
13 and more	1.9	3.2

SOURCE: Muñoz Izquierdo, unpublished data based on population censuses.

Table I-23. Absorption of youths leaving school into the labor market in Mexico, 1960 to 1970 (numbers in thousands)

Years of school completed	*Number leaving school (thousands)*	*Increase in suitable employment (thousands)*	*Coefficient of absorption*[a]
Total	9,747	5,345	55%
13 and more	348	253	73
10–12	452	324	72
6–9	3,176	1,378	43
1–5	5,771	2,105	36
0	–	1,284	–

[a] These absorption estimates may be underestimated by undercounting of the economically active population in the 1970 census, which would mainly affect the figures for any work which requires less schooling.

SOURCE: Muñoz Izquierdo and Lobo, 1974.

significance above all is the low absorption rate for those with little schooling (one to five years and six to nine years), which confirms the theory of the gradual devaluation of primary schooling. If we add to this the numbers leaving school in these groups (5.8 and 3.2 million, respectively), we must admit that the problem of unemployment is acute. The overall absorption coefficient of 55 percent does not reveal the full problem. On closer examination, we find that the employment prospects of youths have deteriorated: their rates of participation in the economically active population have declined between 1960 and 1970 (see Table I-24). However, this reflected a decline only for males; the rates for females increased, possibly owing to an increasing tendency of Mexican women to seek jobs. Moreover, the decline for males was associated with an increase in school enrollment rates.

To gain entry into a labor market where there is already a practically unlimited supply of workers becomes a real problem for young people. Whenever there is an opening, management always demands experience, which is precisely what youths lack. The level of vocational skill, suggested by the data in Table I-20, is also still far from satisfactory, although it has improved. The young man who is neither a college student nor a highly skilled technician has no choice but to begin with a modest job or to join the informal work market as a shoeshine boy, street vendor, or unskilled helper. All this is called "discrimination against youth" by Sanchez (1976), in his excellent study of youth unemployment in Argentina. In Mexico the principal problem has been and continues to be the lack of job opportunities.

Table I-24. Percentages of youths in the economically active population of Mexico, by sex and age group, 1960 and 1970

	1960			*1970*		
Age group	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Total, ages 12–19	28.4%	44.9%	11.8%	26.4%	36.2%	16.6%
12–14	10.7	16.3	4.8	11.6	15.5	7.5
15–19	41.5	67.0	16.7	37.4	52.2	23.1

SOURCE: Mexico, *8th General Census of Population, 1960; 9th General Census of Population, 1970.*

3

Unemployment and Underemployment of Mexican Youths

A detailed analysis shows how and to what extent the rates of unemployment and underemployment affect young people more than the rest of the labor force.

The Statistics

Youth unemployment. In an attempt to gain more adequate insights into the employment problems of youths, we shall consider first data for the three largest urban areas in Mexico—the Federal District, Guadalajara, and Monterrey—and then proceed to estimate unemployment in rural areas. The labor force participation rate jumps sharply between the 12 to 19 age group and the 20 to 24 age group, confirming the fact that at age 20 most Mexicans are fully incorporated in the labor force (Table I-25). Further, after ages 25 to 34, a slow decline in participation rates begins, although the rate for the 45 to 54 age group is higher in Guadalajara and Monterrey than in the Federal District. Also, the rate for the 12 to 19 age group is above average in Guadalajara, whereas it is lower than average in Mexico City and even more so in Monterrey.

The unemployment rates for juveniles in the Federal District differ somewhat from those previously discussed (Table

Table I-25. Percentage of the population in the labor force in Mexico, by age, 1973–74[a]

Age	*Federal District*	*Guadalajara*	*Monterrey*	*Average of three areas*
Total, 12 and older	53.4%	49.8%	46.7%	50.0%
12–19	32.8	36.3	29.9	33.0
20–24	66.6	60.6	62.2	63.1
25–34	67.5	62.0	60.1	63.2
35–44	66.8	61.7	57.6	62.0
45–54	62.2	54.1	52.6	56.4
55 and over	38.0	35.6	32.4	35.6

[a] Data are averages for the four quarters of 1973 and the first two quarters of 1974.

SOURCE: Mexico, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Bureau of Statistics, *National Home Survey, 1974,* Charts V, VII, and IX.

I-26) for two reasons: the earlier figures were for 1969, while we are now considering data for 1973 and 1974; and these data are for a large urban area. The Federal District includes Mexico City, which is one of the most heavily populated urban areas in the world and a strong center for immigration from all over the country. The data for the Federal District also show the great differences in unemployment rates between young people and adults—in fact, high unemployment rates are concentrated among those 12 to 24. Other groups have enjoyed low unemployment rates, especially in recent years. The general rate for the population age 12 and older is high because the juvenile rates are so high. Also worthy of note is the sharp drop from an average of 18.8 percent unemployment for males and females 12 to 19 to 9.7 percent for those 20 to 24. Among the more mature groups, there are no such sharp changes.

The second largest urban area in Mexico is Guadalajara—an important commercial center with much light industry—which has grown considerably in recent years. It is the most important trading center in western Mexico, and, although metropolitan, has considerable agricultural and livestock-raising activities. The unemployment rate for ages 12 to 19 averaged only 13.4 percent in 1973–1974—much lower than that for the Federal District (Table I-27). The average for the 20 to 24 age

Table I-26. Open unemployment percentages by sex and age, Federal District, 1973–74[a]

Period and sex	*Population 12 years or older*	*12–19*	*20–24*	*25–34*	*35–44*	*45–54*	*55 and older*
Total 1973							
Jan.–March	6.3%	16.0%	8.9%	4.0%	2.2%	2.3%	2.4%
April–June	7.8	16.0	8.9	4.0	2.2	2.3	2.4
July–Sept.	8.6	22.1	11.2	4.4	2.4	3.6	4.5
Oct.–Dec.	6.9	18.3	9.0	3.0	3.0	3.6	2.4
Total 1974							
Jan.–March	6.6	17.0	9.5	3.5	2.4	3.2	2.7
April–June	7.6	19.6	9.3	5.1	3.0	3.0	3.6
Males 1973							
Jan.–March	5.6	16.3	9.3	3.2	1.8	2.5	2.3
April–June	6.8	20.6	9.8	3.2	2.6	3.0	4.2
July–Sept.	7.1	22.0	11.2	2.8	1.3	2.9	4.7
Oct.–Dec.	5.6	16.3	7.7	2.3	2.3	3.2	2.7
Males 1974							
Jan.–March	5.8	17.6	9.3	2.7	1.6	2.2	3.2
April–June	6.1	17.5	9.1	3.6	1.8	2.4	4.0
Females 1973							
Jan.–March	7.6	15.6	8.2	5.7	3.1	2.0	2.6
April–June	9.7	19.1	11.5	6.0	5.7	3.0	3.2
July–Sept.	11.2	22.2	11.1	8.3	4.7	5.4	3.9
Oct.–Dec.	9.7	20.8	11.0	4.7	4.7	4.5	1.7
Females 1974							
Jan.–March	8.3	16.2	10.0	5.3	4.2	5.6	1.4
April–June	10.5	22.2	9.7	8.4	5.2	4.6	2.4

[a] "Open unemployment" includes persons out of work who claim to be seeking work.

SOURCE: Mexico, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Bureau of Statistics, *National Home Survey, 1974,* Chart VIII.

group was only 6.3 percent, also lower than for the Federal District. The fact that unemployment rates drop sharply in the April–June period indicates the extent to which business in the area relies on activity in the primary sector.

Monterrey is Mexico's most industrialized city. Its citizens are hardworking and thrifty. Unemployment rates are higher than in the other two cities we have been considering, but this may be attributable to the greater flow of immigration to Mon-

Table I-27. Open unemployment percentages by sex and age, Guadalajara Metropolitan Area, 1973–74[a]

Period and sex	*Population 12 years or older*	*12–19*	*20–24*	*25–34*	*35–44*	*45–54*	*55 and older*
Total 1973							
Jan.–March	6.9%	16.0%	9.8%	3.7%	2.5%	3.3%	2.5%
April–June	6.0	13.0	5.4	3.2	1.4	6.4	6.1
July–Sept.	5.8	14.1	6.0	2.7	2.7	3.0	2.6
Oct.–Dec.	5.6	10.8	5.7	4.1	1.9	4.1	4.2
Total 1974							
Jan.–March	6.7	15.5	5.9	3.0	3.7	5.1	3.4
April–June	4.7	10.3	4.9	3.3	1.4	2.4	3.0
Males 1973							
Jan.–March	6.7	15.6	10.6	3.0	2.9	4.3	3.5
April–June	4.3	8.4	2.9	2.9	0.9	4.6	8.3
July–Sept.	4.8	12.3	6.3	1.8	1.3	3.3	3.7
Oct.–Dec.	5.0	10.0	6.6	3.7	0.8	3.8	4.9
Males 1974							
Jan.–March	6.3	15.6	5.4	2.7	3.6	5.6	3.1
April–June	4.2	9.1	5.9	3.3	1.0	2.4	2.5
Females 1973							
Jan.–March	7.5	16.7	8.5	5.6	1.4	–	–
April–June	9.7	19.4	9.1	4.0	2.9	11.3	–
July–Sept.	8.1	16.6	5.6	5.9	6.8	2.1	–
Oct.–Dec.	6.8	12.0	4.3	5.1	5.3	5.2	2.2
Females 1974							
Jan.–March	7.7	15.0	6.6	4.0	3.8	3.8	4.0
April–June	5.8	12.3	3.3	3.2	2.7	2.5	4.3

[a] "Open unemployment" includes persons out of work who claim to be seeking work.

SOURCE: Mexico, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Bureau of Statistics, *National Home Survey, 1974,* Chart VIII.

terrey. The unemployment rate for youths 12 to 19 averaged 19.6 percent in 1973–1974, and for those 20 to 24 was 8.3 percent (Table I-28).

Youth underemployment. In all three geographic areas we have been considering, about 50 percent of the informal work force earning less than legal minimum wages are under 25 years of age. The figures of the Bureau of Public Employment Services (1976) are really discouraging:

Table I-28. Open unemployment percentages by sex and age, Monterrey Metropolitan Area, 1973–74[a]

Period and sex	*Population 12 years or older*	*12–19*	*20–24*	*25–34*	*35–44*	*45–54*	*55 and older*
Total 1973							
Jan.–March	8.2%	21.2%	9.2%	2.7%	4.0%	3.9%	3.3%
April–June	7.0	18.7	8.9	4.4	2.0	3.7	2.8
July–Sept.	8.8	24.7	9.3	4.1	3.0	2.8	0.9
Oct.–Dec.	5.7	16.1	7.0	2.2	1.4	2.9	1.7
Total 1974							
Jan.–March	7.0	18.8	7.0	3.6	2.0	3.3	5.5
April–June	6.9	17.9	8.3	4.1	1.4	2.0	1.1
Males 1973							
Jan.–March	6.8	20.4	9.9	2.5	3.4	3.0	3.1
April–June	6.7	21.8	9.6	3.6	2.6	3.5	3.4
July–Sept.	6.7	18.6	10.1	4.6	2.6	2.5	1.1
Oct.–Dec.	4.9	14.2	8.4	2.2	0.6	3.3	2.0
Males 1974							
Jan.–March	6.1	18.8	5.7	3.5	1.5	3.8	6.4
April–June	5.5	16.1	7.7	4.5	1.1	2.3	1.3
Females 1973							
Jan.–March	11.8	22.3	7.7	3.8	6.7	9.5	4.3
April–June	7.8	14.4	7.7	7.5	–	4.3	–
July–Sept.	14.3	32.3	8.0	2.6	4.9	4.3	–
Oct.–Sept.	7.8	18.8	4.2	2.4	5.1	–	–
Females 1974							
Jan.–March	9.7	18.8	9.4	3.9	4.8	–	–
April–June	10.5	20.0	9.3	2.9	3.3	–	–

[a] "Open unemployment" includes persons out of work who claim to be seeking work.

SOURCE: Mexico, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Bureau of Statistics, *National Home Survey, 1974,* Chart X.

	Total informal labor force	*Percent of informal labor force under 25*
Mexico City	472,900	51.0%
Guadalajara	155,800	48.2
Monterrey	68,400	56.0
Total	697,100	50.9

The industry groups in which the informal work sector is found include services, retail food stores, and small-scale production of shoes, clothing, and nonmetallic furniture (Table I-29). They do not include the important electrical and automotive industries or the great food-processing plants. Variations in the percentages of youths in the various economic sectors that are characterized by an informal work force are somewhat similar among the three metropolitan areas, and the percentages in any given sector do not differ greatly from one metropolitan area to another. On the whole, the figures fall within a range of 40 to 60 percent, with 50 percent as the median. This is apparently the labor market in which young people under 25 find the easiest acceptance.

Youth in rural areas. For many months of the year, unemployment is chronic in the Mexican countryside, but annual man-days worked per person have increased with the passage of time (Table I-30). Although the most recent figures available are for 1960, things are not likely to have changed greatly since then. The data have not been broken down according to age, but it is believed that they are about the same for adults and youths. As can be seen, more work has always been done on larger privately owned farms, but the small number of days worked even on these private farms is still shocking. The situation for a young man in the country who belongs to a family that operates a small farm or a communal landholding is unendurable.

The preceding figures indicate the extent of underemployment and unemployment among Mexican youths. In the strong-

Table I-29. Percentages of the informal labor force under 25 years of age, three large metropolitan areas of Mexico, 1970

Selected industry groups	*Mexico City*	*Guadalajara*	*Monterrey*
Food products	48.8%	45.0%	60.7%
Intermediate products	55.5	54.2	53.0
Repair services	66.3	65.5	61.9
Clothing and shoes	47.6	52.8	52.8
Retail food stores	38.2	38.9	44.7
Domestic work	58.5	53.0	65.2

SOURCE: Mexico, Bureau of Public Employment Services, Special Tables, Chart 21.

Table I-30. Estimated annual average man-days of work in rural areas, by farm size and type of land tenure, Mexico, 1940 to 1960

	Man-days of work		
Size and type of ownership	*1940*	*1950*	*1960*
Private ownership (5 hectares or more)	127.6	130.1	202.0
Private ownership (less than 5 hectares)	59.0	46.2	34.9
Communal lands (*ejidos*)	80.6	105.7	99.5

SOURCE: Center of Educational Studies, Mexico, based on data from the Agrarian Investigation Center.

est industrial areas, the rate of open unemployment for youths is nearly 20 percent; about 50 percent of the workers in the informal labor market are young people under 25; and annual man-days worked on farms ranged from 35 to 202 in 1960. These statistics indicate that the situation is serious, even though it is one that has prevailed over the years. Recession and inflation affect young people even more without changing the overall situation; yet a boom in the economy will not improve matters for most young people. The main point is that the problem of unemployment and underemployment of youth in Mexico is not accidental—it is structural.

Social Status and Education

Although some improvements have been made, the general rule in Mexico has been "poor education for poor people and poor education for poor regions."

Income distribution by sector. Great social and economic differences among individuals and regions, reflected in the distribution of income, are becoming even wider than before in Mexico. Manuel Gollas and Adalberto Garcia (in Unikel, 1976, p. 252) have compared inequalities in distribution of income for 1950, 1958, 1963, and 1969, and found that the situation has worsened consistently over time. The variations in inequality of income among the three major economic sectors are indicated in Table I-31. Persons working in the primary sector earning less than 1000 pesos per month comprise 52.8 percent of all the poor people in Mexico. The secondary sector accounts for another 19.5 percent of this poorest group, while the tertiary sector accounts for 27.7 percent. The secondary sector shows a more uniform distribution of income, while the tertiary sector includes a somewhat larger proportion of those in the middle and upper classes.

Table I-31. Distribution of income groups by major economic sector, Mexico, 1970

Monthly income (1969 pesos)	*Total*	*Primary sector*	*Secondary sector*	*Tertiary sector*
Average monthly income	100.0%	38.5%	25.9%	35.6%
Less than 199	100.0%	72.7	9.1	18.2
200–499	100.0%	61.5	12.9	25.6
500–999	100.0%	24.3	36.5	39.2
1,000–2,499	100.0%	7.5	39.7	52.8
2,500–9,999	100.0%	9.1	36.5	54.4
10,000 and more	100.0%	20.0	36.4	43.6

SOURCE: Unikel (1976), based on the *Ninth General Census of Population, 1970.*

The distribution of income within each of the three sectors is illustrated in Table I-32. People earning less than 1000 pesos per month comprise a full 93.9 percent of the primary sector, 57.4 percent of the secondary sector, and 57.8 percent of the tertiary sector. The rural primary sector—and to a lesser extent the two urban sectors—receives the full impact of lack of education, as well as all the other attributes of proverty.

Implications for education. In Mexico it is quite obvious that a very poor family cannot give its children continuous and complete schooling; this is a privilege limited to the upper and middle classes. About 42 percent of the population lives in the countryside, as we have seen, and there the rate of school attendance in the sixth grade is only 9 percent, compared with 63 percent in urban areas—an incredible disparity. Furthermore, it is clear that economic factors are decisive in access to educa-

Table I-32. Income distribution of economically active population, by major economic sector, Mexico, 1970 (percent in each income group by sector)

Monthly income (1969 pesos)	*Primary sector*	*Secondary sector*	*Tertiary sector*
Less than 199	34.6%	6.5%	9.3%
200–499	42.4	13.2	19.0
500–999	16.9	37.7	29.5
1,000–2,499	4.1	32.1	31.1
2,500–9,999	1.5	9.2	10.0
10,000 and more	0.5	1.3	1.1
Total economically active population	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

SOURCE: Unikel (1976), based on *Ninth General Census of Population, 1970.*

tion, because 18 percent of school-age children who do not attend school are absent because of insufficient funds. This frustrating inequity is seen in 40 percent of the families with incomes under 200 pesos; in 30 percent of those with earnings from 201 to 400 pesos; in 13 percent of those with incomes of 401 to 600; and in 9 percent of the families with incomes from 601 to 1,000. Ninety-three percent of the families whose children do not attend school for economic reasons have monthly incomes under 1,000, and at the other extreme, 91 percent of the student body of the University of Mexico comes from the 15.4 percent of families who are wealthy. There appears to be an automatic selection process along the educational ladder.

Rodrigo Medellín (1974) has shown a decided similarity in the impoverished regions in their levels of schooling. He has also shown, as an illustration of the sharp contrasts between the poorer and more affluent regions, the pronounced differences in educational attainment of the population in Mexico City and in southern Mexico. In Mexico City, about 22 percent of the population has had no schooling, while 18 percent has completed six or more years of education. In southern Mexico, in contrast, 66 percent has had no schooling, and only 1.3 percent has completed six or more years of school. Medellín's theory is that there is not only a wide disparity in wealth and educational attainment among the seven regions of Mexico, but that this gap is constantly widening.

This disparity also can be examined in terms of the relationship between poverty and school attendance as far as the sixth grade. The data are not recent, but we believe that they are still valid. They show that there is an inverse relationship between income and nonattendance at school as well as between income and dropping out before the sixth grade (Table I-33). Mexico actually spends a larger percentage of GNP on education of the wealthier classes than on that of the needier ones (Table I-34)–inconceivable in a country proclaiming social justice and equal opportunity for all. The explanation for this is that the government spends much more per student in higher grades than on those in the lower grades, but because the upper classes are almost the only ones to benefit from the opportunity for higher education, the result is that the government spends relatively more money on them.

Intergenerational educational mobility. Has there been any progress among children due to improved education of their parents? Probably so, particularly at the higher levels, where the father may have graduated from the university while his son

Table I-33. Percentage of children in Mexico attending school, by family income, 1959

Monthly family income (in 1959 pesos)	*Percentage of school-age children attending school*	*Percentage of relevant age group attending the sixth grade*
Less than 200	38.2	0.7
201–400	60.5	2.5
401–600	72.1	4.1
601–800	71.6	7.1
801–1,000	79.6	5.9
1,001–1,500	87.4	9.4
1,501 and more	84.1	8.0

SOURCE: Mexico, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, *Statistical Bases of the Eleven Year Plan for Primary Education.*

Table I-34. Percentage of the GNP of Mexico spent on education of children, by socioeconomic class of parents, 1959

Socioeconomic class	*Percentage of GNP*
Paupers	0.66
Poor	0.72
Poor in transition	0.76
Insolvent middle class	1.06
Solvent middle class	1.24
Highly privileged	1.53

SOURCE: Mexico, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, *Statistical Bases of the Eleven-Year Plan for Primary Education.*

now aspires to a master's or doctor's degree, perhaps even from a foreign university. This seldom occurred 30 years ago. Furthermore, parents realize that standards have changed: where once it was enough to be a general medical practitioner, now a two- or three-year hospital internship is required as a step toward medical specialization. Likewise, many jobs in the past did not require even a grade-school certificate, whereas today a secondary diploma is demanded. The conclusion is that to succeed as well or better than in the past, more schooling is necessary.

The Center for Educational Studies in Mexico City is preparing a detailed survey of the requirements that are necessary for an industrial job in the Mexico City metropolitan area. Among other things, the center expects to find intergenerational, educational, economic, and social mobility in the area. The data are still being processed. Meanwhile, we can provide some data on intergenerational educational mobility in the city of Monterrey (Table I-35). Although the data show a strong relationship between the educational levels of children and of their parents, they also show that a substantial proportion of children are achieving higher levels of educational attainment than did their parents, greatly exceeding the proportion with lower attainment than their parents.

The current Federal Law of Education has as one of its objectives the goal of "promoting social mobility and distributive

Table I-35. Intergenerational educational mobility, based on survey data for Monterrey, 1967

	No schooling	*Incomplete primary*	*Complete primary*	*Basic or upper medium*	*Superior (college)*
Educational level of the parents	*Educational level of the children*				
No schooling	73%	39%	18%	9%	1%
Incomplete primary	24	47	47	40	22
Complete primary	3	13	29	36	30
Basic or upper medium	–	1	5	12	27
Superior (college)	–	–	1	3	20
Educational level of the children	*Educational level of parents*				
No schooling	27	6	1	–	–
Incomplete primary	51	42	21	9	–
Complete primary	16	29	33	17	7
Basic or upper medium	6	18	33	37	25
Superior (college)	–	5	12	37	68

SOURCE: Balán (1967, Tables VII-9A and VII-10).

justice" (Art. 5, Par. VIII). For this to become a reality it will be necessary to provide equal opportunities not only to enter school but to remain there. This double goal has not yet been achieved. Rural areas have minimal access, if any, to a second-rate primary education compared with urban areas, and the opportunity to remain within the educational system still depends greatly on the family income of the pupil. Worse still, the student's probability of benefiting from education is also linked to the family's socioeconomic level. Hence most pupils who drop out belong to poor families.

What can these dropouts expect in the labor market? Their only choice is to begin at the bottom in the informal work force and slowly climb upward as they gain experience over the years, until they reach at best a mediocre position. It is urgently necessary, therefore, that Mexico delay entry into the work force until at least age 15, even providing subsidies to accomplish this. It would be expensive, but worth it. The size of the labor force as well as the amount of unemployment would be reduced, and job applicants could hold their heads up when seeking work, confident in their improved technical or academic abilities.

After three decades of effort in education, the distribution of income, and hence of education, was more equitable in 1950 than in 1970. Where is the social progress proclaimed by the Mexican Revolution?

4

Current Trends and Future Prospects

The Employment Situation

The nub of the employment problem consists in the fact that year after year the total population wanting to work cannot be accommodated–at least not properly–by the labor market. This gives rise to open unemployment, visible unemployment, and underemployment. At the same time, educational standards have declined while employers insist on increasingly better education from job applicants. Between 1960 and 1968 the various sectors of employment were able to raise their educational requirements by two full grades (Keesing, 1971). Investments to provide more jobs cannot keep pace with growth of job applicants. The problem is constantly becoming more acute, and it is urgent that it be solved in order to reduce the surplus of supply in the labor market.

Formal education. It has been demonstrated that young people 12 to 19 years of age are today more educated than 5, 10, or 15 years ago. The growth rate of school enrollment is now about twice as high as the growth rate of population, which in itself is one of the highest in the world (Table I-21). School registrations increased from 23.4 percent of the age group in 1959 to 56.9 percent in 1975.

Education for work. The establishment of schools to provide job training for young people is a recent development, the goal of which is to provide training for work on a subprofessional level after graduation from basic secondary school. This automatically relieves the pressure on the demand for college education. The types of vocational schools that had been built or were under construction in 1972–1973 are indicated in Table I-36.

Table I-36. Number of vocational schools built or under construction, by type of training, 1972–73

Type of training	*Built*	*Under construction*
Technical schools for industry and commerce	115	19
Training centers for industry	27	–
Centers for technological studies	12	–
Centers for scientific and technological studies	50	17
Agricultural and livestock technological schools	242	84
Agricultural and livestock technological centers	12	7
Centers for forestry	8	–
Training centers for agriculture and livestock	1	–
National centers for marine science and technology	1	–
Regional technological institutes	27	1
Technological schools for fishing	30	3
Training schools for teachers of agriculture and animal husbandry	1	–

SOURCE: Mexico, Ministry of Public Education, National System for Technical Education, 1972–73 (10) 4, 9, 10.

In addition to the larger institutions, there are other means of providing technical education, including (1) the system of open education; (2) schools for adults; (3) teaching "brigades" (traveling teams); (4) basic educational centers; (5) mobile rural classrooms; (6) development "brigades" for the improvement of the Indians; (7) bilingual cultural units; (8) cultural missions; (9) reading rooms; (10) "houses of culture"; and (11) "houses of art." Many large companies have set up procedures to provide technical and academic training to their employees, only some of whom are eager to take advantage of these opportunities.

If all these opportunities were taken advantage of, recurrent education would become a reality. Unfortunately, those who need education the most have the least urge to learn.

Industrial training of employees. Industrialists are the first who should be obliged to provide continuous training to their workers, because they are the first to benefit from the added skills. But they should also be willing to help train youths who are not in their employ as an important social gesture. For example, the specialized sectors of the metalworking or clothing industries could establish centers for training. If workers are not helped to improve by their employers they can hardly be expected to do it on their own; thus the company should help employees, even allowing time off from the job, job incentives, and the like.

The educational system, particularly its technical branch, ought to maintain closer contacts with industry in order to direct young workers toward potential specialties so that they do not become "jacks of all trades and masters of none." We are aware of the argument that has arisen between exponents of specific technical training and those for general education; for our own part we favor specific technical training in Mexico at this point in its development.

Short- and Long-Range Prospects

The heavy tax load required to support the educational program makes it likely that gaps in the present system will continue on both the secondary and working levels for the next 10 or 15 years. Another reason for pessimism is that jobs today require an average of two more years of schooling than formerly. This is a source of frustration to those who 20 years ago believed that graduation from primary school would gain them easy entry into the work force; they now find that many jobs require secondary education as well. The only solution is to study more, either through recurrent education or by staying in school a few years more. The latter calls for missed opportunities to earn money: few today are willing or able to make the sacrifice.

It also has been suggested to the government that industry in Mexico be shifted to a more labor-intensive rather than technical structure, because the latter requires a high rate of investment per capita. Such a change in structure, however, would be very difficult today because present industrial systems are more profitable and are all firmly established.

The most feasible short-range solution would be to invest capital to create the many jobs that are needed to end open and concealed unemployment—and underemployment as well—and to close the gap between supply and demand for jobs. At present, Mexico is going through a very difficult period, but there is hope for the future. Before long, Mexico will become a petroleum-producing country. This gives rise to the hope that oil, like a *deux ex machina*, will help solve Mexico's internal problems and help her assume a more prestigious international position.

Political policies since the 1930s have caused the unequal distribution of wealth in Mexico; 70 percent of the people are impoverished, while there is a small middle class and a tiny wealthy elite.

The policy of "substitution of imports" has kept the rate of absorption of labor into the job market lower than the population growth rate. Production methods appropriate for an underdeveloped country were imposed. As a consequence, today we have unemployment, underemployment, and a great many people languishing in the informal work market. The main problem of unemployment in Mexico is that new jobs are not being created fast enough. It is to be hoped that the new attitudes of President Lopez Portillo, together with the benefit of the recently discovered vast petroleum deposits, will relieve this situation in the near future.

Although youths today are better educated than they were a few years ago, their unemployment rate is still higher than that of other age groups and their participation in the informal sector is greater than before. This unhealthy situation continues to worsen, for youths suffer from the effects of recession more than the other groups. There should be a legal minimum age for working, not lower than 15 years. This would reduce the size of the labor force, would bring supply more into line with demand, and young people would encourage young people to be better educated and prepared to begin their working life.

Because of the complexity of the youth unemployment problem no substantial improvement is expected for at least ten years. Structural changes are required which cannot be established overnight. Youth employment problems are grave and will continue to be serious, according to even the most optimistic observers, for quite a while into the future.

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Part Two

South Asia

by Manzoor Ahmed

5

South Asia in Perspective

In no part of the world is the youth population identified only by an age span (15 to 24 years for the purpose of our discussion) a homogeneous group, and the problems of such a population have many dimensions. An attempt to understand the youth phenomenon, however, brings to the surface a number of general issues and concerns for thinkers and scholars as well as "doers"—those with responsibility to make policies and guide action. One way of looking at these general issues is that they concern transition—the transition of young people into adult roles and responsibilities as workers, citizens, members of the local community, members of the family, and individual human beings—and how effective educational and other social institutions are in facilitating this transition.

Each phase of transition produces inevitable conflicts, frictions and maladjustments. The frictions of transition, however, are shaped and accentuated in the poor countries by overall development problems: resource scarcity, inadequacy of institutions to manage the existing resources, population growth outpacing development, and the pressure of rising expectations. When we consider that the youth population is close to one-third of the working-age population in fast-growing developing countries and that national development programs are future-oriented endeavors to improve the destiny of today's young people, the development process and the youth transition situation become even more closely intertwined. This general formulation of the youth problem provides a framework to examine the dimensions of the problems faced by youth in South Asia, the efforts to solve these problems, and the elements of a more effective strategy.

Quantitative Dimensions

South Asia—Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan), India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon)—with three of the world's most populous countries, accounts for over one-third of the total population of the nonsocialist Third World. The combined population of the four countries was estimated to be 771 million in 1975. India accounts for the largest share of this population, with about 610 million; Bangladesh has 79 million; Pakistan, 69 million; and Sri Lanka, slightly less than 14 million (*World Bank Atlas, 1976*, Annex). These countries also contain the world's largest concentration of mass poverty, with per capita income in 1975 (in U.S. dollars) of $110 for Bangladesh, $140 for Pakistan, and $150 for India and Sri Lanka (and a highly unequal distribution of this average income).

The population in the 15 to 24 age group in the four countries in 1975 numbered slightly over 151 million, assuming a 20 percent share of the age group in the total population. Because countries with high population growth rates have a higher proportion of their total population in young age groups than countries with low population growth rates, the developing countries have relatively higher proportions of youths. According to the *UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1974*, 21 percent of the population of developing countries were between 15 and 24 years of age, while only 17 percent were in this age group in developed countries. The proportion of the youth population is even higher in developing countries when compared with the total adult working population over 15 years of age, with consequent implications for the employment situation and educational services (see Table II-1).

Table II-1. Youth population, total population, and population over 15 years of age, selected countries and years (numbers in thousands)

Country	*Population 15 to 24 (1)*	*Total population (2)*	*Population over age 15 (3)*	*(1) as a percentage of (2)*	*(1) as a percentage of (3)*
Developed countries					
United States (1974)	39,557	211,909	157,293	18.7%	25.1%
Japan (1973)	18,463	108,710	82,264	17.0	22.4
United Kingdom (1973)	6,872	49,175	37,513	14.0	18.3
France (1972)	8,534	51,702	39,437	16.5	21.6
Developing countries					
India (1974)	114,047	586,056	351,033	19.5	32.5
Pakistan (1968)	7,180	44,080	24,865	16.3	28.9
Sri Lanka (1969)	2,610	12,298	7,460	21.2	35.0
Mexico (1974)	11,214	58,118	31,140	19.3	36.0

SOURCE: United Nations Demographic Yearbook, 1974.

The Educational Profile

With respect to the educational profile of the youth population in South Asia, the general pattern that prevails in the three larger countries is broken by Sri Lanka. The overall literacy rates and the gross rate of participation of the respective age groups in the first, second, and third levels of education provide a proxy measure for the educational level of the youth population in the four countries (see Table II-2). It should be noted that the gross ratios in Table II-2 overestimate the participation of the population in the educational process in two major ways—by counting the enrolled students in a particular level who are above or below the specified age group for that level, and by hiding the high dropout rate prevalent in all four countries. In India and Pakistan only a quarter of those who enter the first grade complete the fifth grade. In Bangladesh the survivors are estimated to be 20 percent of the first-grade enrollees. In Sri Lanka the survival ratio is close to one half. These statistics also ignore the unequal opportunities for education between urban and rural areas, between males and females, and between the rich and the poor.

Table II-2. Literacy rate and percentage of relevant age-groups participating in education by level, 1965 and 1970

Country	*Literacy rate population over 10 years of age (1970)*	*Gross enrollment first level*[a] *(1970)*	*Gross enrollment second level*[a] *(1970)*	*Gross enrollment third level*[a] *(1965)*
Bangladesh	23%	56%	13%	–
India	29	79	28	2.6%
Pakistan	39	48	8	3
Sri Lanka	85	103	50	1

[a] The first level is primary education; the second level is secondary; and the third level is tertiary or higher education. The duration of the third level in the four countries is not the same; therefore, the ratios are not strictly comparable.

SOURCE: World Bank, *Education Sector Paper*, 1974, Table 3; *UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1974*, Table 3.2; Marga Institute, 1974, pp. 26, 241.

In all four countries, secondary education is divided into two cycles, the first cycle ending at the end of tenth grade. The progression rate from the first cycle to the second cycle of secondary education (usually lasting two years) is low. In Sri Lanka, where secondary education is more widespread, the proportion of students proceeding from grade 10 to grade 11 (after passing a public examination–General Certificate of Education–Ordinary Level) is only 12 percent (Marga Institute, 1974). Similar barriers of public examination between two cycles at the secondary level exist in all the other countries. The end of the first cycle of secondary education corresponds with age 15 or 16; thus an overwhelmingly large proportion of the youths we are concerned with are no longer participants in the formal educational system.

The overall picture that can be drawn from Table II-2 is that in the three large countries of the region, over 90 percent of the population in the 15 to 24 age group is not enrolled in educational institutions; over 50 percent of the youths are illiterate; 10 to 15 percent have a certain amount of secondary education; and the remainder have complete or incomplete primary education.

In Sri Lanka, the literacy level of the youth population, in line with the overall rate, is around 90 percent. Specific information about the educational attainments of Sri Lanka youth is available from a socioeconomic sample survey conducted in 1969–1970 (see Table II-3).

Table II-3. Educational attainments of youths 15 to 24, Sri Lanka, 1969–1970

Educational attainment	*Number*	*Percentage*
Population 15 to 24	2,609.700	100.0
No schooling	194,700	7.5
Grades 1–5	767,000	29.4
Grades 6–10	1,287,000	49.3
General Certificate of Education (11th grade and above)	360,000	13.8

SOURCE: Gunatileke, 1972, p. 67.

The influence of socioeconomic factors on access to educational opportunities in South Asia is often underrated. Available evidence indicates that nonattendance and dropping out at the primary level are due mainly to economic reasons. In the subsequent stages of education, the ruthless screening process that eliminates a large proportion of students is also strongly influenced by the socioeconomic circumstances of the students. J.P. Naik (1968, pp. 22, 108), writes of India: "At the elementary stages, the weaker sections of the community still get very little benefit, their enrollment is comparatively less and wastage greater. . . . But from the very few studies available, it appears that the equality of educational opportunity provided at the secondary stage is far less than that at the elementary stage. . . . Secondary education is still very largely urban and boys still form the vast majority of secondary students."

Indian economist Jagdish Bhagwati advances the general hypothesis that in capitalist less developed countries (LDCs) like India, the benefits of state subsidies to various stages of education accrue disproportionately less to the poorer groups at each level of education; at successively higher levels of education, the average income of the groups to which the students belong tends to increase and the rate of government subsidization to higher education is greater than to primary education.

He presents corroborative evidence from India to show that for the lowest income groups the opportunity cost for participating in education is higher and the benefit derived from education is lower than for the higher income groups. Bhagwati also suggests (1973, p. 24) that discriminatory benefits and advantages "can be handed to elite groups by the state without obvious disaffection if they are handled via the educational system which in principle, at least, is open to all classes and castes and therefore conceals effectively its inegalitarian impact."

In Bangladesh, two studies in rural areas show that 55 and 68 percent of families who did not send their children to primary school cited economic reasons. Another 29 and 16 percent of the families expressed lack of interest in education, probably a defensive reaction to hide their economic incapacity (Islam, 1973, p. 54).

G. V. Aratchy (1972) argues that in Sri Lanka "free" education at all levels did not open up the higher educational system or provide the benefits of such education equally to members of all ethnic groups and economic strata.

The conclusions of the International Labor Organization expert team on equality of access to education and benefits from education in Sri Lanka merit quoting (ILO, 1971, pp. 160–161):

> First, in spite of high rates of unemployment for a number of years, most individuals with education end up with considerably higher incomes (and no doubt better future prospects) than those without. The differentials have been declining, but they are still large.
>
> Second, and more significant, the distribution of those benefits by social class is far from even. The 1963 Consumer Finance Survey revealed a considerable disparity in earnings even between persons of similar educational levels.
>
> * * *
>
> Third, on the cost side, differences in the ability of different individuals to supplement public provi-

> sion of education can have very significant effects on results.
>
> * * *
>
> Finally, even if the system were free from bias between individuals in terms of family income or social background, it would still embody enormous social inequalities between the few who make the grade educationally and the majority who do not. The higher life-time earnings of the educated are paid for by public education, which is financed from general taxation.
>
> * * *
>
> This last point is probably the most serious aspect of unequal distribution of education in Ceylon [Sri Lanka]. Although inequality internal to the educational system is far from negligible, it is probably less severe than in many other countries, particularly those where the crucial levels of education are not free. But the external aspects of educational distribution in Ceylon may be no less unequal than elsewhere.

Youth Employment

Conventional estimates of labor force participation and measures of employment and unemployment—used in modern economies where the wage sector comprises a major share of the economically active population—can be misleading when applied to South Asian economies dominated by peasant agriculture (characterized by small holdings of land) and "informal" economic activities in the urban areas. For both subsistence-level farming and unorganized urban labor, the distribution of time between work and leisure is not clearly structured, the activities of the household merge with the farm or other unit of production, and the return on labor is not definitely ascertainable. Conventional methods of measuring employment based on certain hours of gainful work during a reference period do not readily apply in this situation. Conventional calculations also systematically underestimate the active labor force and consequently the rate of unemployment and underemployment, particularly among youths, because these calculations leave out young people seeking work for the first time, those discouraged from doing so by the employment prospects, and boys and girls engaged in nonwage family subsistence activities. The contribution of housewives and women to household activities—which comprise a large share of agricultural processing in the South Asian countries—is systematically excluded from employment measurement, explaining the apparently low participation rate of women in the labor force. With these limitations in mind, the conventional estimates of labor force participation for the total population and the youth population as a percentage of the total working-age population (14 to 64 years) are shown in Table II-4.

Table II-4. Percentage of the population in the labor force, for persons 14 to 64 and for youthful age groups, by sex, South Asia, selected years

	Percentage of age group in labor force					
	14-64		*15-19*		*20-24*	
Country and year	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Bangladesh (1974)	35.2%	18.7%	–	–	–	–
India (1971)	32.9	11.9	36.6%	15.5%	49.6%	17.8%
Pakistan (1972)	30.0	5.4	–	–	–	–
Sri Lanka (1971)	34.8	18.8	37.6	26.4	65.4	42.2

SOURCE: International Labor Office, *Yearbook of Labor Statistics, 1975.*

In the absence of detailed information, we assume somewhat liberally that 10 percent of the youths in the 15 to 24 age group in South Asia are enrolled in educational institutions. Of the 90 percent who are out of school, more than half are girls, a large portion of whom are already or shortly to be in the traditional housewife's role (most girls marry between ages 15 and 20) and are not likely to be economically active outside the household. Leaving aside the in-school population and the housewives, roughly one-half of the youth population in South

Asia, about 75 million youths, were in the active labor force in the mid-1970s.

A clear picture of the employment status of youths in the labor force is not available. Where data are available, they show a higher incidence of unemployment among youths compared with the overall unemployment rate. One estimate in India indicates that unemployment among youths in the 18 to 24 age group is 25 percent, both in the literate and illiterate segments of the population group (Indian Institute of Public Opinion, 1976). In Sri Lanka 37 percent of the youth population was estimated to be unemployed according to a 1969–1970 survey. However, unemployment was primarily a youth problem, since over 82 percent of all unemployed were concentrated among the youth (Gunatileke, 1972).

Because of problems with the concept of employment and its measurement, these percentages do not signify the real dimensions of the employment situation of youths, nor are they useful in establishing appropriate policy measures. A useful analytical step would be to disaggregate the youth labor force by education and urban-rural background and to consider the employment situation of the disaggregated groups separately. This will cause a large overlap between educational status and domiciliary status, because most of the educated youths reside in the cities and most of the illiterates reside in rural areas (with the exception of Sri Lanka, as we shall see).

An overwhelming majority of all youths in the region live in rural areas, in line with the low urbanization of these countries. According to a somewhat dated source, around 80 percent of the youths live in the rural areas (Table II-5).

Adequate information about the educational attainments of the youth labor force were not available for all four countries. In India according to the 1971 census, 45.8 percent of labor force youths ages 18 to 24 were literate. Of the literate youths, 38 percent were students and, not surprisingly, 38 percent were urban dwellers. Four percent of the literate youths had higher education (above the secondary level) and 21.5 percent had ten years of formal education (Indian Institute of Public Opinion, 1976).

Table II-5. Urban and rural distribution of youths 15 to 24, South Asia, selected years

Country	*Year of data*	*Total youth population (millions)*	*Urban youth population (millions)*	*Rural youth population (millions)*
India	(1961)[a]	78.2 (100.0%)	14.9 (20.3)	58.3 (79.7)
Pakistan including Bangladesh	(1961)[a]	14.3 (100.0%)	2.4 (16.4)	12.0 (83.6)
Sri Lanka	(1963)[b]	1.9 (100.0%)	0.4 (21.0)	1.5 (79.0)

[a] Based on census of population, 1961.
[b] Based on tabulation of a 10 percent sample.

SOURCE: United Nations, 1968.

The pattern of a high concentration of literate youth in the urban areas and among the student population is likely to be similar in Pakistan and Bangladesh. In Sri Lanka, however, with its high overall levels of educational attainment, the distribution of educated youth between urban and rural areas is reported to be roughly proportional to the overall distribution of the population between urban and rural areas (Poleman, 1972, p. 41), and the level of education and literacy in the youth work force is much higher than in the other three countries.

The broad picture that emerges for the three large countries is that a large majority of the youths in the labor force are illiterate or semiliterate, living in rural areas, and are willy-nilly doing their best to eke out a living from agriculture and other rural occupations. Then there is a relatively small minority with a considerable spread in educational attainments, ranging from illiteracy to the highest university degrees, employed in urban economic activities and with occupational goals and life aspirations tied to nonrural, "modern" economic activities. (This picture also fits Sri Lanka except for one important detail – almost all of the rural youth in Sri Lanka are literate and a substantial portion have completed primary and even secondary school.) The neatness of the picture is, of course, marred by a number of phenomena. Some illiterate and semiliterate young people from the rural areas move to the towns, lured by the potential rewards of the modern sector. A segment of the urban work force is in the so-called informal sector, half way between the peasant economy and the wage economy. And various public and private rural development programs and services attempt to place and retain at least a small segment of the educated and professionally trained people back in the rural areas.

The division of youths between urban and rural residents—accentuated by the educational gap (always excepting Sri Lanka), the duality of modern and traditional economic activities, differences in occupational opportunities and their rewards, and different goals in life—is wide enough to warrant separate consideration of the employment problems of rural, educationally deprived youths and urban educated youths. Sri Lanka has to be treated as a special case, though the following discussion has some application to the island nation.

Rural youths. In the agriculture-based economies of South Asia, possession of land is a major determinant of the economic situation, including opportunities for gainful employment, of rural families. With limited employment prospects in the nonagricultural economic activities in rural areas and a high ratio of the expanding working-age population being absorbed into agricultural activities, unemployment and underemployment in rural areas, reflected in low productivity and low earnings, are increasing (Raj, 1974, 1976). In this situation only families with access to adequate cultivable land can be assured of gainful employment for their working-age members. Others have to compete for the limited nonfarm jobs and farm laborer's work that provide sufficient employment only during short seasonal peaks. A large portion of rural families in South Asia fall into the latter category.

In India, according to one estimate, rural households that derive their livelihood primarily from agricultural labor but have no land constitute 27 percent of all rural households. They own only 5 percent of the cattle, 3 percent of the buffaloes, and

2 percent of wooden and iron plows; this implies that most own neither assets nor implements and have no option but to sell physical labor. To this group may be added the very small landholders owning less than 2.5 acres. Their holdings are not economically viable, and the large majority of them are actually farm laborers rather than producer-farmers. This group comprises 33 percent of all the rural households (Swany, 1976).

A recent sample survey of households in ten districts in Bangladesh revealed that 70 percent of the rural households relied for their livelihood entirely or partially on agricultural labor, but 38 percent of the rural households had no land available for farming either by ownership or by rent (Integrated Rural Development Program, 1976).

In Sri Lanka, where a large share of the nation's land is owned by estates, nearly 60 percent of the holdings are smaller than two acres. It is reported that a "cycle of impoverishment" affecting the small farmers has resulted in increased landlessness and a rise in acreage under sharecropping by 158 percent between 1946 and 1970 (Marga Institute, 1974, p. 19).

In Pakistan the portion of landless farmworker households and households with landholdings insufficient for family subsistence is over half of the rural households. This group conservatively estimated at 40 percent of the rural households, constitutes the hard core of rural poverty and deprivation. The hard core of unemployed and impoverished youths belong to this 40 percent of the rural households; their families possess little or no cultivable land, and they themselves are illiterate and without special skills. They are, of course, the victims of extreme poverty and deprivation and the correlates of poverty—malnourishment, ill health, lethargy, absence of initiative, and lack of a political voice and social connections that could be of help in escaping their condition.

The employment problem of these young people is not just the lack of work. On the contrary, when rural youths are not working as field hands, they are taking care of family and household chores, engaged as domestic servants at the landowner's home, hawking trinkets or more essential commodities to village wives, carrying loads in the local market, or begging and stealing. These youths probably put in more hours of back-breaking labor than full-time employees in regular wage-earning jobs. The youth's hard work, however, does not earn them enough to ensure the basic amenities or even to enable their escape from dire poverty. It is now recognized in literature on employment and rural development that the main problem is to create work opportunities that ensure a minimum standard of living for the worker—to raise the productivity and earnings of activities which the rural economy can provide and sustain. As the ILO employment mission to Colombia concluded (ILO, 1970, p. 15): "In the last resort the real tragedy of those without jobs is the poverty into which they slip and which they share with all those with very low incomes. After all, the ultimate objective of policy is not just to provide more jobs, but to provide work which is socially productive and yields enough income for a reasonable standard of living." (See also Jolly, Seers, and Singer, 1973).

In the case of Sri Lanka, the high educational level of rural youths probably means that their occupational and life aspirations are somewhat similar to those of urban youths—to the extent that formal education shapes these aspirations. According to a survey, among persons aged 15 to 24 who have been seeking jobs but have never been employed, 35 percent of those without secondary education aspired to white-collar employment, but among those with the secondary level diploma, 76 percent wanted white-collar employment (ILO, 1971, p. 87). Unfortunately, these data were not separated for urban and rural youths.

While educated rural youths in Sri Lanka may have expectations unlikely to be nurtured by the educationally deprived rural youths in the other countries, the nature of the problem in Sri Lanka is not fundamentally different: a rural country, with a large proportion of households below the "poverty line," and a high level of overall and youth unemployment and underemployment.

Educated unemployed youths. The discussion about the employment situation among young people is dominated by the theme of unemployment among educated youths—particularly the mismatch between the educational achievement and the expectations of graduates on the one hand and the available employment opportunities in the modern sector of the economy on the other.

Though the total numbers of unemployed educated persons are relatively small compared with total youth employment (again with the exception of Sri Lanka), educated unemployment is cause for special concern for several reasons. It appears that in all developing countries, including South Asia, unemployment is higher among the educated than among illiterates and higher at the middle level of education than at the bottom end. It is also concentrated among the younger age groups, particularly in the 15 to 24 age group. (Turnham and Jaeger, 1971). It is, of course, a waste of national resources when the skills and knowledge acquired through education are not put to productive use. Another important reason national authorities and policy makers are especially concerned about the educated unemployed is that they are more vocal, articulate, and capable of being organized than the educationally and socially underprivileged rural youths. The frustration and anger of educated youths can and have caused trouble for the national governments. (Educated youths also happen to be the sons and daughters of those national authorities and policy makers).

Conventional measures of employment and unemployment are more applicable to educated youths than to rural youths because most of the former are employed and aspire to jobs in the "organized" sector of the economy. Even here, of course, caution must be exercised with definitions because very different results may be obtained by altering definitions. For instance, some measures in India show a very low rate of unemployment because they leave out all those who have been gainfully employed for any amount of time during a reference week and those not currently seeking full-time work for whatever reasons (Blaug, 1976). A more liberal (albeit vague) definition of unemployment results in substantially larger unemployment figures for the educated.

Whatever definitions of unemployment and methods of calculation are used, no one will deny that there is a serious problem of unemployment and underutilization of the educated work force in the South Asian countries. A report prepared by the Manpower Section of the Planning Commission in Bangladesh (1974) shows the stock of persons in the labor market with various secondary and postsecondary educations and the estimate of the number of jobs demanding these qualifications (Table II-6). The balance of "unemployment and inappropriate placement" is staggering for secondary graduates and those with higher degrees in humanities and social sciences. These statistics should be interpreted with caution, however, because "inappropriate placement" is not the same as unemployment and because many questions can be raised about the assumptions and methods used in the calculations. Despite the limitations of the data, they at least reveal a serious problem of unemployment, underemployment, mismatch of qualifications and jobs, unfulfilled expectations, and frustrations among educated youths. They also raise questions about the scale and nature of the higher educational effort, especially when a large number of the youths do not enjoy the benefits of primary education.

Detailed tabulation of the unemployment situation among educated youths in Sri Lanka is available from the 1969–1970 Socio-Economic Survey (ILO, 1971, p. 28; see Table II-7). This tables clearly demonstrates that the higher the level of education of a young man, the higher his chances are of being unemployed, up to "A" level (12 years of formal education) when the rate of unemployment falls. The overall rate does not differ much between urban and rural areas in Sri Lanka, except for women, who fare particularly badly in the rural areas and for whom the unemployment rate does not drop even at "A" level as it does for men.

Recent data about unemployment among those who completed secondary education in India are not readily available. A mid-1960s estimate is that the total of educated unemployed in India at that time was about one million, the bulk of whom—probably 90 percent—were secondary-level graduates (India, Report of the Education Commission, 1976).

Indian census data of 1971 provide basic information

Table II-6. Stock of degree-holders in job market and number of jobs requiring degrees, Bangladesh, mid-1973

(1) Educational qualifications	*(2) Number available for employment*	*(3) Number of jobs demanding this qualification*	*(4) Balance of unemployed and inappropriately placed*	*(5) Percent (4) ÷ (2)*
Secondary level				
Secondary school certificate	630,576	246,792	383,784	60.9
Higher secondary school certificate (science group)	45,252	1,733	43,519	96.2
Higher secondary school certificate (other groups)	112,743	5,208	107,535	95.4
TOTAL	788,571	253,733	534,838	67.8
Bachelor's level				
(First university degree)				
Arts	88,631	33,913	54,718	61.7
Commerce	51,434	13,388	38,046	74.0
Science	31,694	3,574	28,120	88.7
TOTAL	171,759	50,875	120,884	70.4
Master's level				
(Second university degree)				
Humanities	6,441	3,919	2,522	39.2
Social sciences	7,703	3,145	4,558	59.2
Economics, statistics, business	6,360	4,459	1,901	30.0
Natural sciences	6,492	6,096	396	6.1
Law	5,658	2,198	3,460	61.2
Journalism (diploma & degree)	212	886	-674	–
Library science (diploma & degree)	33,271	21,420	11,851	35.6
Post secondary technical diplomas				
Engineering technicians	11,182	11,416	-234	–
Medical technicians	5,655	10,617	-4,962	–
Jute and textile technicians	871	4,134	-3,263	–
TOTAL	17,708	26,167	-8,459	–
Professional degrees				
(Other than teaching)				
Engineering	4,456	4,887	-431	–
Medicine	4,903	5,185	-282	–
Agriculture	3,569	4,897	-1,328	–
TOTAL	12,928	14,969	-2,041	–

Table II-6. Stock of degree-holders in job market and number of jobs requiring degrees, Bangladesh, mid-1973 (continued)

(1) *Educational qualifications*	*(2)* *Number available for employment*	*(3)* *Number of jobs demanding this qualification*	*(4)* *Balance of unemployed and inappropriately placed*	*(5)* *Percent (4) ÷ (2)*
Professional education degree				
Master's level	1,248	408	840	67.3
Bachelor of Ed/Teaching	11,128	52,229	–41,101	–
Certificate and Higher Certificate in Education	49,381	189,036	–139,655	–
Diploma and Degree in Physical Education	2,140	1,541	599	28.0
TOTAL	63,897	243,214	–179,317	–

SOURCE: Government of Bangladesh, Manpower Section Planning Commission, *Employment Market for the Educated in Bangladesh: A Benchmark Analysis by Level and Type of Education in Terms of Economic Sector* (June 1974).

about the employment situation of the postsecondary degree and diploma holders (India, 1976). The total number in this category described as "involuntarily unemployed" was reported to be 288,487–13.5 percent of all postsecondary graduates in the country (Table II-8). The highest proportion of unemployed compared with the total graduates in the field was in the technical/vocational field, followed in descending order by science, commerce, engineering, and agriculture. The percentage of unemployed among graduates in arts and humanities was slightly lower than the average for all fields. This suggests that a policy of restricting admission to arts and humanities and increasing enrollment in technical and professional subjects–a course of action often advocated for alleviating the problem of unemployment among the educated and enhancing the contribution of education to national development–is unlikely to work. The higher rate of female unemployment in all fields is striking, especially because of the overall low ratio of female graduates among the total number of graduates (less than 400,000 in a total of 2.1 million graduates in 1971).

Table II-7. Youth seeking work, percentage of the active labor force by age group, Sri Lanka, 1969–70

	Age 15–19				*Age 20–24*			
	Urban	*Rural*	*Estates*	*Total*	*Urban*	*Rural*	*Estates*	*Total*
Both Sexes								
No schooling	13%	11%	31%	23%	29%	8%	5%	8%
Primary	44	34	27	34	16	17	12	15
Middle	57	41	71	46	44	38	25	39
"O" Level	87	93	–	92	45	69	–	63
"A" Level or above	–	–	–	–	22	17	–	27
TOTAL	51	41	32	41	37	39	11	34
Males								
No schooling	14	11	46	26	17	–	18	11
Primary	48	39	35	40	11	13	12	12
Middle	52	36	79	41	34	33	39	33
"O" Level	86	80	–	81	41	61	–	55
"A" Level or above	–	–	–	–	20	50	–	40
TOTAL	50	37	44	40	29	30	17	28
Females								
No schooling	11	–	22	20	38	14	–	6
Primary	28	19	16	19	56	36	12	24
Middle	73	54	33	56	77	54	–	55
"O" Level	88	100	–	98	54	78	–	74
"A" Level or above	–	–	–	–	25	100	–	88
TOTAL	52	51	19	42	61	59	5	44

SOURCE: Socioeconomic Survey, 1969–70, First Round, Special Tabulation, cited in ILO, 1971, Table 8, p. 28.

The high concentration of enrollment and graduates in arts, humanities, and natural sciences is reflected in the fact that together they constitute 76 percent of all unemployed graduates. The large number of graduates from the general arts and sciences colleges draws attention to their unemployment, but these graduates would be unemployed even if they had studied engineering, agriculture, commerce, or some other vocational subjects, for which the unemployment rate is even higher. Thus, if enrollment in higher education cannot be restricted or reduced and if the employment structure remains unaltered, it is a "lesser evil" to have the majority of students in low-cost arts,

Table II-8. Unemployed postsecondary degree holders, by educational fields, India, 1970

Educational fields	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
A. Unemployed as percent of total degree holders in field			
Arts and humanities	10.7	19.7	13.1
Science	15.3	21.8	16.5
Commerce	13.8	23.0	13.9
Agriculture	11.3	20.2	11.4
Veterinary	5.4	13.1	5.5
Medicine (allopathy)	3.8	6.1	4.2
Medicine (others)	5.2	11.4	5.9
Nursing	3.5	3.5	3.9
Engineering	12.7	23.5	12.8
Technical-Vocational	18.3	38.4	21.8
Others	7.3	17.5	9.2
All fields	12.0	19.6	13.5
B. Unemployed in field as percent of total unemployed degree holders			
Arts and humanities	42.0	72.9	50.5
Science	26.4	22.3	25.2
Commerce	11.0	1.0	8.3
Agriculture	2.1	0.1	1.5
Veterinary	0.3	0.0	0.2
Medicine (allopathy)	1.0	1.0	1.0
Medicine (others)	0.5	0.4	0.5
Nursing	0.0	0.2	0.1
Engineering	14.6	1.0	10.9
Technical-Vocational	1.7	0.6	1.4
Others	0.4	0.5	0.4
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0

SOURCE: Sharma and Apte, 1976, Tables 1, 3, 10, and 11.

humanities, and general science courses rather than in high-cost professional and technical courses.

While the high level of unemployment among the educated is a common feature of all the countries in South Asia, there are different interpretations of this phenomenon, reflecting divergent normative and ideological viewpoints. Some view the problem essentially as a "waiting period" or time lag between completion of education and placement in jobs. Blaug, a proponent of this view, explains that "the rate of open unemployment among the educated is high because so many of them take

6–12–24 months to find their first job; the rate of unemployment among those who have finally acquired a first job is in fact trivial" (Blaug, 1976, p. 6). According to this view, eventually the unemployed graduate either finds a job he aspires for or lowers his sights to accept what is available. The transitory nature of the phenomenon does not, however, minimize its seriousness, because at any particular time a large segment of the educated work force of the country is unutilized and the waiting period appears to be increasing, causing an ever larger percentage of the educated work force to be out of work. For advocates of this view, the remedy lies in measures that would reduce the waiting period and hasten the adjustment between the number and expectations of job seekers and the number of jobs. The basic tools to be used are to be drawn from the operation of the market mechanism–restricting the expansion of higher education by cutting public subsidy or using other financial moves and improving the flexibility of the labor market so that wages respond to the supply of labor.

Opponents of this view stress the differential between private and social returns on education, wage rigidities, artificial links between jobs and educational qualifications, slow growth of the economy, and the educational explosion (see Edwards and Todaro, 1974).

Another more sociological view of unemployment among the educated emphasizes the educational process itself and what it does to the students. It is argued that the attitudes and expectations created by the educational system and the knowledge and competence imparted by it fail to prepare students adequately for available work opportunities. Educational reform efforts in South Asia are based largely on this premise. Myrdal discusses this theme in *Asian Drama* (1968, p. 1646): "Throughout South Asia there is a traditional contempt for manual work, and the educated tend to regard their education as the badge that relieves them of any obligation to soil their hands. . . . This attitude constitutes a large part of the problem of the 'educated unemployed.' "

The remedial measures proposed by the proponents of the sociological view vary, including curricular reform emphasizing a more "practical bias" in the school, more sweeping reforms such as radical changes in the institutional structure of education, and giving a prominent role to nonformal education and widening access to education for the underprivileged masses.

The points of view mentioned above are not exclusive of each other, and most scholars as well as policy makers tend to combine elements of the market and sociological views in explaining and seeking remedies for the problems of the educated unemployed. Their differences are usually in the degree of emphasis on specific elements.

There is a view that sees both market and sociological manifestations of the unemployment problem as symptoms of a more fundamental problem concerning the overall socioeconomic structure. According to this structuralist view, unemployment among the educated–a specific form of a more general problem of underutilization of human resources–arises from the development design and goals chosen; the consumption pattern permitted and promoted; the technology of production that perpetuates waste of human resources and dependence on the industrial countries; dualism between the urban and rural areas and the modern and traditional economic activities that persists; and the political power structure which, for instance, grants subsidies to unemployable university students but denies basic education to the masses (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). The more pragmatic structuralists, while recognizing the centrality of overall structural change in solving the problem of the educated unemployed in developing countries, also recognize the resistance and obstacles to far-reaching changes in the political power structure and the development design in most Third World countries. They will settle, at least temporarily, for measures that bring about certain changes in the structure of the educational system and of the labor market that may cumulatively over time contribute to overall structural change (Jolly, 1974). In this sense the structuralist approach encompasses at least some of the market and the sociological solutions.

Economic Factors

To recapitulate, the main problems that South Asian youths face, burdening their passage from childhood and adolescence to full adulthood and permanently thwarting the fulfillment of their life ambitions, are as follows:

First, nearly one half of the youth population in the three largest countries of South Asia are deprived almost totally of even a basic level of education, and most suffer from unequal access to all levels of education. The main problem in this connection is how to widen educational opportunities without exacerbating the "educated unemployment problem" which even the restrictive educational system has already created.

Second, a large segment of the youth population, concentrated mostly but not totally in the rural areas and among the educationally deprived, is victim to a vicious cycle of low productivity, low earnings, and extreme poverty. The problem of this group is not unemployment in the conventional sense but the incapacity of the rural economy to generate sufficient productive work to ensure a minimum standard of living for the worker.

Finally, there is an ever-widening gap between employment opportunities and the occupational expectations of the youths coming out of the educational system, creating a serious problem of unemployment and underutilization of educated young people. Unemployed educated youths, therefore, are a burden on society instead of being an asset to a developing country. Nevertheless, public subsidies to higher education continue while basic education remains unavailable to many. Issues that arise in this connection include: Can or should higher education be curtailed? Can it be transformed to fit more closely to job opportunities? Can access to it be made more equitable and, if so, what would be the consequences for employment?

To these should be added the problems arising from frustration, despondence, anger, loss of self-esteem, cynicism, and the sense of alienation that are created by poverty, unemployment, unfulfilled expectations, and shattered dreams. The phenomenon euphemistically described as "unrest" is usually mentioned only in connection with students. Although rural youths do not capture the headlines as the students do, they are also susceptible to unrest and agitation. It is reasonable to surmise that they played a part in the April 1971 upheaval in Sri Lanka, in the Naxalite violence in India in the late 1960s, and in the scattered lawlessness and violence in recent years in the Bangladesh countryside. It is also a reasonable presumption that disruption and upheaval in rural areas in South Asia will increase in the future, with the active participation of youths, unless the present situation begins to improve at a perceptible pace.

The youth problem worldwide has many dimensions and manifestations, but in South Asia the economic issue is clearly dominant. Preparing for and finding gainful work that will permit youths to escape poverty and fulfill their aspirations is the main concern of all youths–rural and urban, illiterate and highly educated. Although education is not merely preparation for an occupation, the high level of unemployment and unfulfilled occupational expectations among the educated make employment prospects the fulcrum of thought and action about education for both individual students and national authorities.

The contrast in the nature and magnitude of the problem in South Asia and in the advanced industrial countries is striking. Kerr (1976, pp. 138–140), presenting an analytical framework of the youth problem in the United States on the basis of a schematic categorization of youths by sociologist Martin Trow, estimates that about 80 percent of American youths "have both the resources and the preparation for life to fit into the meritocracy, and for them one could say there is no problem." Another 10 percent either have adequate preparation or the financial resources (but not both) to assume their adult roles and responsibilities. The real problem category comprises 10 percent–ghetto youths with no resources and no preparation. The proportions in South Asia appear to be just the reverse: 80 percent have serious deficiencies in resources or preparation for entering adult life; 50 percent of the youths lack both; and only 20 percent have a relative advantage in the form of either resources or preparation, a small fraction of whom are fortunate enough to enjoy both.

6

Responses to Youth Employment Problems

As we have seen, the problems young people face as they pass from adolescence to adulthood are intertwined with the problems of economic growth, social change, technological choices, distributive justice, and educational progress–in short, with problems of overall national development. The policies and actions of nations, that affect the problems of youths often are not specific responses to youth problems per se but are taken within the context of national goals and strategies for development and are intended to serve objectives and needs besides those of youths. Keeping this qualification in mind, we can discern six categories of developmental activities in South Asia that may be viewed as responses to problems faced by youths. These are: (1) expansion of primary education and literacy programs, (2) reform of secondary education, (3) attempts at restricted development of higher education, (4) programs for youth employment promotion, (5) programs to recruit youths for national service, and (6) general rural employment programs also benefiting youths.

Efforts to Expand General Education

In South Asia, only Sri Lanka has the distinction of making primary education available–almost universally to both boys and girls and in urban and rural areas. In India, the national constitution guarantees every child the right to education up to age 14, but thus far it has been possible to bring only about two thirds of the primary-school-age children into school. In Bangladesh and Pakistan the portion enrolled in primary schools is around half of the age group.

All three countries attach high importance to achieving universal primary education, as reflected in targets for expansion which are invariably overambitious. The draft of India's Fifth Plan mentions the goal of 97 percent enrollment of the age group by 1979. The New Educational Policy of Pakistan announced in 1972 anticipated universal enrollment in primary schools for boys by 1979 and for girls by 1984. An Education Commission appointed by the government of Bangladesh recommends that compulsory primary education be introduced throughout the country by the end of 1978. These ambitious targets and the emphasis placed on quantitative expansion and enrollment ratios have led to a strategy of linear expansion of the existing pattern without any basic change in the content, structure, and objectives of primary education. Primary education is regarded as a full-time, age-specific, sequentially graded activity based on a standard national syllabus. This rigid adherence to the conventional approach has meant that the expansion effort, despite good intentions, has failed to face up to some basic problems of the present system, and this in turn has hampered the expansion effort itself.

As we have noted, the enrollment ratio hides the fact that only a small percentage of those enrolled actually complete primary education. The reasons for dropping out are complex, and the combination of factors vary for different groups and regions. The available data suggest the preponderance of economic factors among the causes for dropping out. Even when primary education is free, the opportunity cost for a poor family is high when all of its working hands are needed for survival. The basic economic factors cannot be altered by any educational measure, but the opportunity cost of attending primary schools for the children of poor families could be reduced by introducing a part-time, variable-duration, flexible timetable for primary education, thereby reducing the number of dropouts and encouraging more new entrants from poor families.

Attendance in primary school does not necessarily ensure that educational objectives are achieved. Many students who leave primary school early may be described as "pushouts" rather than "dropouts" because of the poor quality of teaching, the lack of enthusiasm of the teachers, and the absence of essential supplies such as books and teaching aids. The Indian *Report of the Education Commission* (1964–1966) has commented: "The system of primary education continues to be largely ineffective and wasteful and many children who pass through it either do not attain functional literacy or lapse into illiteracy soon afterwards. If we are to continue our dependence on this programme alone for the liquidation of illiteracy, we may not reach our goal even by 2000 A.D.!"

The issue of quality is partly a matter of resources and partly a question of right policies and strategies, and all these aspects cannot be discussed here. But it should be noted that though quantitative expansion and qualitative improvement are not necessarily in conflict, in the efforts to expand primary education in South Asia, little progress has been recorded on the side of quality. The purpose of the expansion itself will be defeated if the level of achievement of the system cannot be raised.

A related dual question is: How can primary education opportunities be expanded without further aggravating the already serious employment problem among the educated, and what can be done to enhance the contribution of primary education to a process of rural development that would help improve the employment prospects, earnings, and living standards of rural youths? The answers to these questions lie partly in policies and actions external to the educational system, but the relevance of primary education to rural development efforts and realistic employment prospects of students is certainly an educational question. Suffice it to note that the conventional primary education program, viewed essentially as an academic step toward the next level of formal education, does not effectively address the problem of relevance.

The situation in Sri Lanka is instructive for the other countries in the region, illustrating the scenario resulting from the strategy of linear expansion. Although near universal enrollment was achieved at the primary level almost two decades ago (through a combination of the Buddhist tradition of respect and support for education at the community level, early missionary efforts, and a high level of government commitment to public services) the drop-out rate is still high, though not as high as in the other countries, and unemployment is a more serious problem among the completers of primary education than among dropouts and illiterates.

The countries of the region recognize the need for literacy programs and adult education for the many people who have passed childhood and adolescence without ever stepping into a school or deriving much benefit from their brief encounter with schools. In India, under the auspices of the Directorate of Adult Education and through nongovernment voluntary organizations, functional literacy programs are conducted throughout the country. The government-sponsored efforts in functional literacy were in operation in over 100 districts with a total participation of about 200,000 in 1974 (India, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, 1974).

Pakistan's *The Educational Policy* (1972) anticipated a program to provide literacy training to 11 million illiterates (roughly a quarter of the total illiterates) by 1980. Progress in implementing this plan, however, has been extremely slow, and the target is expected to be missed by a wide margin. Bangladesh has no national effort comparable to that in India and Pakistan, though the need for it has been frequently proclaimed. A number of small-scale nongovernment programs constitute the main literacy and adult-education efforts in Bangladesh.

The literacy and adult functional education programs in the three countries with high illiteracy so far cover only a small fraction of the potential clientele. It has proved difficult to expand the programs and make them effective by integrating them with other components of rural and agricultural development, even when substantial effort has been made, as in India. A general problem with adult literacy efforts in poor countries is that it is extremely difficult to maintain learner motivation and make the programs relevant to learner needs when there is little direct use of literacy in the daily life of the learner in a nonliterate rural environment. Literacy, it appears, becomes functional only in a dynamic socioeconomic environment after a degree of rural transformation has been achieved (UNESCO-UNDP, 1976).

A more pertinent issue as far as the youth population is concerned is that the adult programs are not oriented toward giving a second chance for basic general education to the adolescents and young adults who missed primary school or dropped out early. Recognizing this need, the Indian Ministry of Education has proposed general education programs for out-of-school children in the 6 to 14 age group and youths in the 15 to 25 age group. The programs, still to be fully developed, are to be part time with multiple entry levels, shorter in total duration than the primary program, and conducted under diverse organizational sponsorship at the local level.

Reform at the Secondary Level

Rising unemployment among those who complete secondary education and increasing pressure on higher education led the South Asian countries in the 1960s to many variants of the attempt to reorient second-level general education to give it a work-oriented practical bias and to include vocational subjects in it. The premise is that a vocationally oriented education at the secondary level would lead the student to employment after secondary education, thus reducing educated unemployment and steering young people away from higher education. This notion can be found in plans to "diversify" secondary education in Pakistan and Bangladesh, to introduce practical subjects in the secondary program in India, to turn the lower secondary level in Ceylon into a prevocational course, and to open agricultural secondary schools.

There is obviously a case for introducing work-orientation elements into both primary and secondary schools—far too often characterized by rote memorization of textbooks and rigid syllabuses largely unrelated to the life of the learner (Staley, 1973). However, when the enrichment of the school experience with work orientation is confused with occupational training and supplying labor market needs, neither purpose is served well. The record of reform attempts in secondary education in South Asia bears testimony to this. The Indian *Report of the Education Commission, 1964–1966*, summarizing the experience of multipurpose secondary schools that include technical and vocational subjects in the curriculum, said: "Most of the students who join these schools have only one purpose in view—to pursue their studies further at a university. Consequently, streams like fine arts and agriculture and even the technical stream, which do not lead to popular courses at the university stage, are taken up by few students. . . . One of the main objects for which the scheme of diversification was introduced . . . has not been realized."

The prevocational program in Sri Lanka at the lower secondary level (grades 6 to 9) is intended to enable students to "execute selected manual skills related to vocations with an appropriate degree of proficiency" as well as to achieve other general education goals. A few years of experience with the program (introduced on a limited scale in 1969) already suggest that the main goal of the program is not likely to be achieved. Among the reasons cited by the International Labor Organization (ILO, 1971, pp. 181–182) were:

> (a) In the face of uncertain employment demand and little information about such demand, schools with their standard syllabuses cannot match supply and demand;
>
> (b) The school course cannot always provide the necessary basic technical training for some occupations and the specialized training needed for others;
>
> (c) The needed workshop, equipment and facilities in the school setting make the school program

> highly expensive; specially because the training needs to be responsive to technical change and change in skill demand.

The majority of the graduates of agricultural courses in secondary schools are employed by the government, and it is the ambition of most graduates to land a white-collar job (ILO, 1971).

The following general comment about secondary-level formal vocational education in developing countries fully applies to South Asia:

> Their costs are too high to allow for more than a small fraction of young people to be served; they have had severe difficulties recruiting and holding good technical teachers in the face of competition from the private sector and other government agencies; the training they provide is often poorly adapted to market employers; their unchanging curriculums, methods, and equipment become increasingly ill adapted to the dynamically changing requirements and working conditions of their environment; and frequently a high proportion of their graduates do not end up in jobs that effectively utilize their training. On the whole the record of formal vocational training at the secondary level bespeaks strong caution against an undiscriminating pursuit of this approach in the future; above all in rural areas. [Coombs and Ahmed, 1974, p. 144.]

There are examples of secondary-level technical and vocational training programs in the region—relatively few with a small number of trainees compared with the total secondary system—which are more effective in producing readily employable skilled workers. These programs are usually managed by ministries other than education or by private organizations. The programs may or may not include a significant general-education component, but typically one third or more of their instructional time is spent on acquiring practical work experience. Their effectiveness is positively related to the degree to which they shed the trappings of formal institutional training: full-time instruction programs and instructors, lengthy courses, rigid syllabuses, expensive fixed installations, inadequate provisions for practice and so on. One of these relatively successful programs is the vocational training program of the Ministry of Labour in Sri Lanka, which, besides two fixed centers in Colombo, has over 100 mobile units traveling throughout the country. Over two dozen crafts and skills are taught by this program in courses ranging from six to nine months to persons who are unemployed or who require upgrading certain skills (Margo Institute, 1973).

Development of Higher Education

Recall the following facts about higher education in South Asia:

1. A substantial percentage of graduates of higher education is unemployed continuously, wasting national human resources and causing frustration and unrest among graduates and students.

2. Like the rest of the educational system, higher education is characterized by unequal access—more so because of the screening process in the preceding stages.

3. Nevertheless, higher education is subsidized heavily by the governament and consumes a large portion of the government budget,[1] although the majority of youths (if dropouts from the primary level are included) are deprived of basic general education.

Is restricting the expansion of higher education the best solution of the problems created by the above factors? Restricted entry into higher education would limit the number of job-seeking graduates, would reduce the size of public subsidy to the relatively privileged at the cost of the poor, and would free resources for the expansion of primary and basic education or employment-generating economic activities.

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[1] In Sri Lanka, higher education is offered free of charge. In Bangladesh 61 percent of the finances of the general universities and 81 percent of the technical universities are provided by the government. (Islam, 1973). Universities are also government financed in India and Pakistan.

The solution, however, is not so straightforward. Restriction imposed by financial measures (such as cutting public subsidy and making students pay the full cost) will increase the present inequity by making higher education and the attendant benefits a monopoly of the rich. Provisions to offset this consequence by quotas and financial assistance to the poor are not likely to be effective in unequal societies known for corruption and influence peddling. Veteran Indian educator and champion of equal opportunities, J. P. Naik (personal communication), claims that the present open system actually serves as the main channel for social mobility, allowing a trickle of people from lower socioeconomic strata to filter up the educational stream. On this ground, among others, Naik hesitates to support severe restrictions on higher education.

Furthermore, the policy of restriction implies acceptance of the present employment pattern of the educated, the incentive structure, the national development design, and the values that have created the present situation in the first place. Why should the unemployed graduate not work as a rural primary school teacher, a community development worker, or an extension agent instead of becoming a clerk in a city office? Is it not possible to create the conditions and the motivation necessary for the university graduate to find a useful role in the massive endeavor of national development? After all, the number of people with higher education in South Asia, as a proportion of the population, constitutes only a fraction of that in the developed countries.

Whatever the pros and cons of restricting higher education, politically it has proved impossible even to slow down the growth of higher education in this region, though a strong body of support for restriction exists. India's authoritative *Report of the Education Commission, 1964–1966* (p. 97) declared it necessary "to restrict the unplanned and uncontrolled expansion of general secondary and higher education, if massive educated unemployment is to be avoided."

Similar comments were made in the Fifth Plan document of India: "The Indian economy at its present level of development has neither the resources to expand higher education at the present rate nor the capacity to absorb all the resulting increase in output into employment at wages corresponding to the expectations of those who receive higher education" (India, *Draft Fifth Five Year Plan 1974–79*, vol. 2, p. 198). The plan, nonetheless, fixed a target of increasing university enrollment during the plan period from 3 million to 4.65 million, with a corresponding increase in the participation ratio of the 17 to 23 age group from 4.4 percent to 6.0 percent. Pakistan similarly plans to add 100,000 new students to higher education by 1980, raising the enrollment ratio of the relevant age group from 2 to 3 percent (Pakistan, 1972, p. 3). The First Five Year Plan of Bangladesh projected a 63 percent increase in university enrollment in five years (Bangladesh, 1973). The Ministry of Education of Sri Lanka projects over 100 percent increase of enrollment in higher education between 1968 and 1980.

Development plans for higher education include proposals for qualitative improvement such as improved facilities, laboratories and libraries, and lower teacher-student ratios. None of the plans anticipate any major structural change in higher education in the form of part-time and recurrent courses, flexible entry requirements and prerequisites, credit for practical experience, variable duration and timetable of courses, breaking the interdisciplinary boundaries, and so on. The dominant pattern will be full-time study beginning immediately after secondary school and lasting two to four years, ending in a university qualifying examination for a degree in one of the conventional subjects.

With respect to technical education, the Indian Five Year Plan did propose the use of formal technical institutions for purposes other than full-time formal courses: "part-time and informal education programmes will be expanded—not always or necessarily in relation to the highly structured academic courses leading to a degree or a diploma—and specific training programmes will be organized to meet established manpower needs of industry" (p. 203).

Another exception to the general pattern is Pakistan's People's Open University, established to provide part-time education "through correspondence course, tutorials, seminars, workshops, laboratories, television, radio broadcasts, and other mass communication media." The activities of the university so far have been confined mainly to upgrading elementary teachers and training instructors for literacy programs (Pakistan, Educational Policy 1972–1980, p. 22).

Employment Promotion and Training Programs

Large-scale public programs for skill training and employment promotion specifically for out-of-school youths do not exist in South Asia, though many small programs run by private groups and voluntary agencies can be found. The total number of youths served by these programs is insignificant compared with the potential clientele. Sri Lanka appears to have received more government support for this type of program than the other countries and is also rich in nongovernment programs.

Two programs of the Sri Lanka Department of Agriculture teach rural youths modern farming techniques to orient them toward farming and make them more productive farmers. One of these is the Young Farmers' Clubs, with about 100,000 members. The clubs are organized and guided by the extension officers and agricultural instructors of the Department of Agriculture. A smaller program is the Practical Farm Schools, designed to give practical agricultural training to young men and women on their own land or on land leased from the government. Sri Lanka also has a Youth Settlement Scheme, through which young people are provided training and financial support to open and reclaim new agricultural land.

An example of a nonagricultural skill-development program in Sri Lanka is on-the-job training in weaving, a program of the Department of Small Industries in cooperation with the handloom weaving industry of the country. About 10,000 out-of-school youths, 90 percent of whom are female, are trained through this program every year.

Skill-training programs for out-of-school youths are advocated on the ground that the young people should be equipped with occupational skills as they move toward adulthood. Nonformal (as opposed to full-time institutional) training is favored for this purpose because of its potential advantages, such as flexibility in adapting to local needs and conditions and the ability to harness local resources and talents for the training programs. In practice, these potentials have often remained unrealized: "For the most part these programs are small and raise serious questions of replicability on a large scale; many are restricted to young people who have completed primary school, thus leaving the great majority at a further disadvantage; sometimes the training they give (especially in rural areas) is not sufficiently linked to realistic job opportunities in the area and, like formal schools, they do not provide follow-up support to their trainees to help them apply their training and enlarge upon it" (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974, p. 144).

Some important questions about skill-training programs, particularly in the rural context, are: Do these programs make an incremental difference? Would a certain number of people be absorbed into the economy anyway and the training program just keep them occupied for a while during the period of waiting for jobs? Would the jobs not be filled somehow, even if there were no training programs, and the genuine training needs met through on-the-job apprenticeship or other improvised means, though the beneficiaries might not be the same people? What difference do the training programs make in productivity, earnings, and income distribution? These questions have to be answered for each particular situation before training programs can be justified or managed effectively.

The evidence indicates that training programs may be effective in spurring employment and higher earnings when they are accompanied by various related support services (such as credit, management advice, marketing, design, supply of raw materials, and so on) and when they are made an integral part of a broader development strategy of an area.

The handloom weaving program in Sri Lanka illustrates the typical problems the skill-training programs face. The program appears to be a vigorous effort, but the number of rural people employed in this industry and the annual intake of trainees in the program have remained stagnant for many years, though the government has plans to increase handloom production substantially. It appears that various government policy measures concerned with industrial development, import, and taxation have created disincentives for the expansion of the rural handloom industry. Moreover, the wages of most handloom weavers are below poverty level due to low productivity and a limited market for their products. This occupation, therefore attracts mostly women who are content to make only a supplementary contribution to family income. Similarly, the farmers' training programs are handicapped by the fact that the return to smallholding agriculture in Sri Lanka is so low that it is an occupational choice for young people only as a last resort.

Youth Service Programs

Programs of youth service may be organized within the context of formal education usually by educational institutions themselves, with enrichment of students' educational experience as a major goal. Another goal of these programs is to involve students in "practical activities that help meet the basic needs of other people (e.g., through agricultural extension, health care and education, social-welfare work)" (Fussel and Quarmby, 1974 p. 8). There is also the expectation that channeling the student's energy and interest into useful extracurricular activities may help alleviate the problems of poor discipline and unrest among students.

Programs organized for out-of-school youths may have a range of objectives, including providing temporary employment, instilling discipline and patriotic values, teaching and improving skills, and mobilizing youth manpower for national development schemes (see Ahmed and Coombs, 1975). The youth service schemes for out-of-school youths do not appear to have taken hold in South Asia except to a degree in Sri Lanka. For the student population, India and Pakistan have attempted to introduce national service schemes, but the efforts have been less than vigorous and the number of institutions and students covered by the schemes has remained small.[2]

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[2] It is stated in the Indian Fifth Plan document that "The introduction of the National Service Scheme, on a universal basis at the college stage, had been under consideration ever since the formulation of the First Plan. The general approach was to take students from their institutions to places of

The general conclusion about service schemes for students is that if well organized and properly executed they can to a certain extent meet their objectives of enriching the students' education, helping the needy, and channeling student energies constructively. But as the Indian experience suggests, logistic and management problems are often insurmountable, especially if the program is initiated and directed by the national government rather than being organized locally. In any event, these schemes cannot be viewed as a solution to the unemployment of graduates or even as a very effective remedy for the despair and frustration caused by an uncertain future.

The only large government-sponsored service program for out-of-school youths in South Asia is that of the National Youth Service Council in Sri Lanka, established in 1969 with the mandate to organize and coordinate activities beneficial to youths and the nation for both in-school and out-of-school youths in the 14 to 25 age group. The council, however, was most active in organizing work camps and participating in national development projects for out-of-school youths. As an incentive for participation, the youths were given credit points which entitled them to preferential treatment in gaining employment or admission to an institution of higher education. The program, however, became embroiled in political disputes when the political party in opposition won the national election in 1970, and program activities came to a halt. After more than two years, the government reactivated the program.

Examples of nongovernment service programs for out-of-school youths are the youth activities of the Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka and of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement

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work where their boarding and lodging would be a charge on the state. The programme never got off the ground mainly due to organisational and financial difficulties involved in moving, feeding and finding work for a large number of students over long periods and the inadequate motivation of students who had to be away from their studies. The Fifth Plan intends to orient the whole scheme and make national service an essential part of the curriculum; effort will be made to link every subject with practical problems and socially useful work, generally in the vicinity of each institution" (*Draft Fifth Five Year Plan 1974-79*, Vol. II, p. 201). However, progress in fulfilling the intentions of the Fifth Plan also has been slow as before.

Committee (BRAC) in Bangladesh. Interestingly, in both programs mobilization is undertaken as a part of broader multifaceted rural-development programs, which the two organizations have initiated in selected rural areas of the respective countries. In Sarvodaya, youths constitute one of seven functional community groups in a village that accepts the Buddhist principle of moral reawakening and collective self-help activities. The members of the youth group engage in either teaching or learning skills for rural industries and other economic activities and in services for children, adult education, and cultural activities.

The goal of the BRAC program is to engage rural youths, especially those who have some education, in becoming organizers and guides of development projects in education, health, agriculture, and the like in their own villages. It is BRAC's premise that this goal can be achieved if rural youths can be organized and given support both in the form of some leadership training and with seed money for projects developed by the youth groups. BRAC has developed a training program for the youth workers and has initiated what is called the "youth self-starter" program in a number of rural localities (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, n.d.).

These two voluntary programs are relatively small scale and have not been in operation long enough to provide conclusions regarding their effectiveness in achieving the main goal of engaging youths in national development efforts. Even if they are effective, it is unlikely that they can be replicated widely enough to involve a substantial portion of the youth population. Moreover, the contributions these programs might make to solving the problem of career choice of the participating youths is not clear. The extent to which these activities can contribute to the solution of the economic problems of poor rural youths depends on the effectiveness of the overall development program of the parent organizations, of which youth mobilization is only one facet. It should be noted that these two voluntary programs are not typical of youth service programs in other parts of the world, which are usually unrelated to a larger multifaceted development program and are more rigidly structured with respect to training, activities undertaken, duration of service, and the administration of the program.

Rural Employment Programs

Programs aimed at alleviating the effects of severe rural poverty by creating rural employment through public-works programs have been in operation in South Asia. Similarly, encouragement of small and cottage industries has been an important part of the effort to improve the rural economic situation. While these programs are not aimed specifically at the youth population and the age breakdown of participants of these programs is not available, it is a reasonable assumption that young people from poor rural households, the group hardest hit by low earnings and underemployment, are employed in these programs in substantial numbers.

Rural works programs. The experimental rural-works programs that began in the Comilla area of former East Pakistan in the early 1960s provided the inspiration for continuation and expansion of this program in both Bangladesh and Pakistan. Pakistan's rural-works program, besides serving employment and income objectives, is also expected "to mobilise local resources and to motivate the people for a mass productive effort so that the process of development gets institutionalised and is associated with a large segment of the population" (Pakistan *Annual Plan, 1972–73*, p. 112). The various components of the works program in Bangladesh, planned and designed at the subdistrict level, constitute part of the effort to attain self-sufficiency in food grains by constructing and maintaining irrigation, drainage structures, and market roads (Bangladesh Planning Commission, 1974).

In India a crash scheme for rural employment was initiated in 1971–1972, under which 210 million man-days of employment was provided during the two subsequent years, mostly in rural road-construction work. In addition, a number of special programs included in the Fifth Plan such as the Small Farmer Development Agencies (SFDA), Drought Prone Area Program (DRDA), and Marginal Farmer and Agricultural Laborers Program (MFAL) were intended to relieve rural poverty and underemployment. The crash scheme was abandoned in the Fifth Plan, but a variant of the rural works projects was retained in what is known as the Minimum Needs Program, under which rural road building, drinking-water supply, and construction of primary schools and other public facilities would be undertaken (India, *Draft of Fifth Five-Year Plan, 1974–79*).

Somewhat comparable to the rural-works program in the other countries of the region are the activities of the Rural Development Societies in Sri Lanka. Formed under the auspices of the Ministry of Local Government and Home Affairs, there are over 8,000 Rural Development Societies throughout the island, of which 1,500 have exclusively women members. The societies are voluntary organizations, functioning in specific rural localities, meeting from time to time and responding to current local needs—basically on the principle of self-help, but drawing upon technical and financial assistance from the government when such assistance is available. Primary concerns of the societies have been construction and building projects, irrigation works, afforestation, and the organization of rural industries on a cooperative basis.

The significance of programs creating employment and channeling income directly to the rural underemployed and unemployed is undeniable. When it is so intended, most of the funds for these programs can go into wages rather than materials and equipment. When these are implemented on a large enough scale, they can make an appreciable difference in the precarious living condition of the poor rural workers.[3]

Dandekar and Rath (1971) suggest that it is possible to organize a massive rural-works program in India with block- and district-based planning and management of the projects that would provide regular and continuous employment to the 30 percent poor rural residents (excluding the poorest 10 percent who may be unable to work and need welfare assistance) and raise their consumer expenditure to a desired minimum per capita per year. They argue that the necessary transfer of income could be achieved by cutting consumption by 15 percent for the richest 5 percent of the population and by 7.5 percent for the next richest 5 percent.

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[3] In Bangladesh the share of the wages in some of the projects ranged from 85 to 94 percent of total project costs (Costa, 1973, p. 382; see also Thomas, 1971).

While it is possible to conceive in theory the efficacy of rural-works programs in alleviating rural poverty and underemployment among youths and others, implementation of these programs is another matter. The Bangladesh program, which was relatively large in the mid-1960s, lost its momentum in subsequent years. The National Planning Commission pointed out in 1974 that the program was hampered by scarcity and price escalation of construction materials, lack of technical personnel, and lack of sufficient institutional support by the local government bodies.

Dandekar and Rath (1971) concede that their ambitious scheme can be implemented only if the implementing organizations and institutions function effectively to mobilize the labor force and other resources; if measures can be taken to match monetary resources with real resources by redirecting real resources to rural areas; if the pattern of production is reoriented to supply simple consumer goods to meet the demands of the newly created consumption capacity; and finally, if the political powers take the necessary fiscal measures to reduce consumption among the rich and to harness the resources thus released for rual development projects. This is a long list of conditions!

Small and village industries. All of the South Asian countries have followed an active policy of encouraging small-scale and village industries as the means for creating employment opportunities at low capital cost and bringing the fruits of economic development to the rural areas. India, however, has had the largest and most diverse experience among the developing countries in promoting small-scale and village industries. Since the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956, a plethora of agencies and programs have come into existence with the aim of expanding small-scale and village industries. Prominent among these are the Small Scale Industrial Development Organization (SSIDO), with its own network of Small Industry Service Institutes, Extension

Centres, and training/production centers; the Rural Industries Projects Program (RIP), with 49 pilot rural-industries project areas; the *Khadi* and Village Industries Commission, with jurisdiction over handspinning, weaving, and 14 other traditional village industries; the *high-level* Small Industries Extension and Training Institute (SIET); various entrepreneur training programs; and programs run by the state governments (deWilde, 1975).

While the numbers provided employment by the above programs are large, they pale to insignificance when compared with India's total labor force of over 200 million. In both *Khadi* and other village industries, low productivity and low cash income still offer less than a living wage to most workers.

The Fifth Plan envisioned substantial expansion of the RIP program. DeWilde (1975, pp. 482–483), while supporting the RIP approach, points out some of the pitfalls.

> The problem of selecting types of industries that can operate profitably and competitively on a small scale has not yet been fully resolved. Nor have adequate efforts been made to devise technologies appropriate to small-scale industries in which the availability of capital and labor skills is varied. In rural areas profitable opportunities for the expansion of traditional industries or the introduction of new and more modern industries are likely to be severely limited unless there has been a significant prior development of basic agricultural and livestock production that can provide the raw materials for processing or the markets for service and consumer goods industries.
>
> Another dilemma that has never been satisfactorily solved is the conflict between the legitimate concern for dispersing small industries to the most backward and economically depressed areas and the need for discrimination in selecting locations and enterprises which make for viable projects.

7

Strategy for the Future

The picture painted in the preceding chapters is somber, with only a few faint rays of light. The problem is not to create opportunities for individual self-realization and growth into full adulthood for a small number of deprived and underprivileged youths or to facilitate the adjustment of a small fraction of the youth population with the existing social and economic institutions. The problem is one of massive deprivation and unequal opportunities for the large majority of youths with respect to basic education, productive work, earnings to maintain a minimum standard of living, and participation in the mainstream of socioeconomic development. The size of the deprived and disadvantaged youth population and the source of their problems make these problems the core of important program and policy issues of national development. Marginal adjustments in existing educational programs or in other institutions and special projects to help specific groups of youths will only help a few youths without making much of a dent in the total situation. In South Asia, as in other parts of the Third World, therefore, there is no alternative to a structuralist solution of the problems faced by youths—an approach that embraces relevant overall national development priorities, goals, and actions that create the appropriate environment and reinforce specific measures and policies having a direct bearing on youths. A strategy in tune with the structuralist approach has three main components: (1) educational actions, (2) a positive manpower approach and (3) a development strategy focused on basic needs.

Educational Development

Expansion of basic general education. The opportunities for basic general education at the primary level can be widened and a larger population ensured a minimum level of educational achievement if the exclusive reliance on the conventional age-specific full-time primary school is relaxed. A combined formal-nonformal strategy can be adopted that would (1) reduce the "opportunity cost" of participating in primary education for poor families, (2) involve local communities in enlarging primary education opportunities for their children, and (3) make primary education relevant to rural life and environment.

The economic roots of unequal access and participation in primary education cannot be removed by educational measures alone. However, some measures can be taken to reduce direct and indirect costs of participating in education for poor families. Flexibility of school hours, course duration, and timetable to conform with both the local agricultural cycle and the pattern of children's labor in family subsistence activities; less rigid age requirements for admission and different age groupings for the same grade levels; and part-time and abbreviated "second chance" programs for older children and youths are a few of these measures.

Community involvement has become an educational cliche, but in almost every situation, with the use of some imagination and sincerity, more could be done to increase the school's accountability to the local community, relate the school experience to the individual community's circumstances, and tap community resources to enrich the educational program. For instance, the International Council for Educational Development had a number of specific recommendations "to encourage communities to take a greater interest in the education of their children" in the context of an integrated rural development project in Bangladesh: forming representative community education committees to maintain and improve primary schools and other educational facilities in the village; forming postschool youth groups to maintain and improve the knowledge acquired in school; using local artisans, farmers, and development agency personnel as instructional resource people in the school; developing learning activities that use the institutions, productive enterprises, cultural heritage, and rituals of the local community as learning resources; undertaking joint student-teacher economic and agricultural activities both as learning enrichment and a means for generating supplementary resources for school and student.

A minimum level of general education, commensurate with the resources and overall socioeconomic development of a country, is generally accepted as a basic human need important in its own right, and decisions about expanding primary education generally do not take the effects of primary education on youth employment into consideration. To the extent that primary education exacerbates the alienation of youths from the rural environment or raises expectation for an "educated man's job," it is a problem of the pattern of reward for productive work and the urban-rural disparity in the national development design. Measures suggested above for broader participation and community involvement will be of help in minimizing the separation of young learners from their social and economic milieu. There is certainly room for more effort directed to the improvement of primary-level curriculum, educational materials, and quality of teaching that use the physical and social environment of the learner as the main learning resource. This is different from saying that rural primary schools can or should be used to make little farmers out of the students. Any design of primary education that makes young people adjust to their present life of poverty and deprivation cannot succeed, because the people invariably see through the subterfuge. It is imperative, therefore, that the effort to expand basic general education be on the basis of "a parity of esteem" between second-chance and nonformal programs and the conventional primary schools and there should be a perceivable evolution toward a unified (not uniform) system for all (Ahmed and Coombs, 1975, pp. 335–364).

Functional education within economic projects. Complementing the efforts to expand primary-level basic education focused on children and adolescents, functional literacy and education programs are needed for older youths and adults. These programs, however, need to be planned and implemented as inherent aspects of *economic* improvement projects for the learner groups. For illiterate and semiliterate young adults, improvement of the economic status is the central concern, overshadowing other problems they may face. Any activitiy that calls for their time, energy, and commitment must be directly linked to economic improvement. Creating a critical awareness of the learners' own situation and preparing for collective or individual economic and self-help projects would be at least as important as literacy skills in the functional education programs for older youths. Experience in South Asia and in other parts of the Third World indicates that the help of both established voluntary organizations active in rural development and local voluntary groups is vital in the implementation of these programs. Because of the crucial relationship between economic improvement and educational programs for young adults, a strong national coordinating agency, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, should work hand in hand with local cooperatives and government structures as leaders of these programs.

Reform in secondary education. Secondary education in South Asia, beyond five years of primary education or its equivalent, is characterized by two conflicting features: (1) the primary function of selection and preparation for higher education—a function performed inequitably and at the cost of the majority of students who do not go on to higher education, and (2) unsuccessful efforts to give secondary formal education a vocational orientation. Combating these twin deficiencies of secondary education calls for affirmation of formal general education, as opposed to vocational training or grooming for university. This requires a realistic appraisal of what secondary education can and cannot achieve under the present circumstances in South Asia—an admission that of those who survive high school, some go to the world of work and others to various higher education programs, but the large majority drop out before the end. The only way the system can be fair to all these groups is to offer all of them a foundation of general cognitive knowledge and intellectual skills and let them take their chances in the wider world. This stress on the "foundation-building" role of secondary education would require it to be viewed as an extension of primary-level general education, making it more flexible organizationally in order to make it more widely accessible, and taking the occupational training functions out of it. The implications in terms of curriculum and teaching approach of "foundation education" are self-evident: The aim will be to create educated men and women who are intellectually curious, analytical, and rational in their approach to problems of life and society, socially responsible, and cognizant of important social institutions and the historical and socioeconomic roots of underdevelopment in South Asia. They should also acquire basic language and mathematics skills and understanding of basic concepts of natural sciences. In brief, the products of secondary education, instead of being stuffed with bits of information useful in university courses or adept in manual skills that may or may not be salable, should develop the ability to take advantage of specific on-the-job or institutional occupational training, to benefit from higher educational opportunities when and if available, and to enter adult social and individual roles and responsibilities.

The organizational and structural flexibility suggested above for primary education must also be introduced at the secondary level on the same grounds of reducing opportunity costs for participants, granting wider access, and mobilizing available resources for education. This structural flexibility is necessary to accommodate in fair proportions students coming from formal, nonformal, and hybrid programs at the primary level with consequent diversity in age and socioeconomic background. Eventually and gradually, as national resources permit, secondary education up to tenth grade or its equivalent, offered through a variety of channels—full-time, part-time, and recurrent courses with appropriate use of communication media—would be recognized as basic education and would be universally available.

The strategy for middle-level technical/vocational training should be to shift the main burden of skill development to employers and to strengthen the indigenous system of skill development in the traditional sector of the economy. Educational planners need not assume that there is a skill shortage if a formal training program does not exist for a particular skill; in fact, empirical evidence suggests otherwise. The economies of the South Asian nations are kept functioning, by and large, by people who have learned their productive skills through on-the-job experience and indigenous traditional skill-transfer methods rather than by those trained in vocational training programs. The first step in this technical/vocational training strategy would be to put a moratorium on the expansion of all formal full-time vocational/technical institutions—such as the vocational training institute, industrial training institute, technical training centers, technical institutes, and polytechnics—and then to turn them into multipurpose, flexible, technical service centers for providing specific training and assistance to industrial and business enterprises. The second step would be to prepare flexible, often part-time, specifically designed ad hoc courses in cooperation with employers. These courses would contain a large component of practical apprenticeship, would be offered only when a distinct market for the skills exists, and would often be attended by students also enrolled in the general secondary education program. Another step would be to identify the ways in which traditional artisan and crafts skills are transmitted and the possible need for assistance to improve or expand this sytem of transmittal.

A doctrinaire position need not be taken regarding the separation of vocational training and general secondary education. There are examples, such as the Diyagala Boys' Town, a residential Jesuit institution in Sri Lanka, that combine general education and vocational skill development for youths. The key to an effective program appears to be an intensive and fairly prolonged supervised work experience, provided at a low cost in a communal setting, which contributes substantially to the operating expenses of the institution. Even with successful programs, it is not known whether a large number of them are needed or if their graduates would be readily absorbed in the employment market (Van Rensburg, 1974).

In some economically backward regions, it may be necessary to make a special publicly funded effort for skill development, in which case a self-supporting skill-development program through production cooperatives might be tried. Van Rensburg, from his experience with a self-supporting skill-development program in Botswana, found that the key to a replicable skill-training approach with significant impact on rural employment and development was training through cooperative production enterprises. The cooperatives (1) bring unemployed adolescents, youths, and adults into productive employment; (2) accumulate capital through the participants' own efforts; (3) pool the resources of the people and establish diversified production enterprises, and (4) develop the necessary productive skills. It would be extraordinarily difficult for a government bureaucracy to design and manage such a program involving popular participation, improvisation, and local decision making. This type of program has a better chance of success if voluntary organizations with competent leadership are given government support and granted sufficient latitude to guide the programs with relative autonomy.

Recurrent higher education. With regard to youth employment problems, the policies and programs of higher education must fulfill three conditions: (1) deal effectively with the problem of mismatch between expectations and employment opportunities, (2) ensure more equal access to higher education, and (3) prevent a disproportionately large share of public resources going to higher education at the expense of primary and secondary education. We are not considering here the quality of higher education or the appropriate role of higher education in national development, but policies that meet these three criteria should have positive consequences with respect to both educational quality and national development efforts. We will consider in this section the feasible options only within the educational system, recognizing that concomitant measures are needed outside education as well.

Reducing enrollment in higher education would in principle meet criteria (1) and (3) above but is unlikely to make access and participation in higher education more equal. Moreover, the scale of the reduction in higher education needed to meet these conditions is not politically feasible in South Asia. There are other objections to the solution of cutting enrollment in higher education to match the number of "acceptable" white-collar job openings. This is placing far too much faith on manpower projections (see Ahmad and Blaug, 1973). More serious, as noted earlier, is the assumption that the existing utilization and reward structure among people with higher education is optimal.

The most practical and feasible approach toward higher education development requires a two-pronged attack: first, restricting the growth of full-time, specialized, professional higher education through financial measures, and second, introducing structural and organizational changes that contribute to more equal access to both professional and general higher education, wider opportunities for general higher education, improved professional preparation and career choices, and reduced demand for full-time and high-cost specialized higher education.

A distinction must be made between specialized professional education, imparting required skills and competence for specific occupations and jobs, and general higher education, not specifically linked to competence and skills required to perform occupational tasks. While structural changes and the recurrent-education approach should be applied to both categories, the case for limiting the growth of general higher education is arguable mainly on the basis of limitations of national resources, whereas professional and specialized education must be planned with an eye to employment demands sustainable by the national economy. Social demand for general higher education can be better satisfied if ways are found to reduce the costs of such education—for instance, through a radio- and television-based "open university" approach, more intensive use of existing facilities and personnel during "off hours," self-study by students with the help of programmed materials and other low-cost learning aids–in short, through possibilities opened up by the recurrent-education approach.

Extreme financial measures such as making every student pay the full cost of higher education (modified by grants and loans to the qualified poor) may not be practical as the major weapon for shaping the development of higher education, but it is possible to raise tuition substantially for full-time and professional higher education in South Asia and to apply a sliding scale, granting full and partial tuition exemption, based on income. Along with increased fees, there is room for increased scholarship assistance and guaranteed loans for students from families underprivileged because of income, tribal or caste affiliation, and domicile.

There is a fairly wide range of measures which come under the category of structural and organizational flexibility in higher education programs. A broad definition of recurrent education includes postponement of admission into higher education after the secondary level, part-time courses, recurrent programs with short cycles of variable duration, programs combining practical work and academic training, granting credit for practical experience, and so on (Faure, 1972). It is necessary, however, to discriminate in selecting recurrent-education ideas that would be effective in the South Asian context in meeting the criteria of higher education development mentioned above.

Postponed entry into higher education is suggested by the ILO employment mission to Sri Lanka and Kenya as the means for cutting college enrollments, acquainting students with the world of work, and improving their career choices (ILO, 1971). It is argued that if all students are required to spend two or three years in productive work found by themselves in public or private employment or in a voluntary youth-service program and university selection is based on work experience as well as on previous academic achievement and aptitude tests, many students will find that a university degree is not required for a satisfying occupational career and others will have clearer ideas about the type and level of higher education needed for their own future. The mad rush into higher education would be further reduced and would be more closely linked to career choices if the scheme for a national-service and work-experience interval is accompanied by part-time courses that young people can take while employed and short-cycle courses which they can join later in their career.

Contrary to the usual practice and belief in South Asia, in specialized professional training in such fields as agriculture, engineering, and medicine, it is possible to replace a substantial part of full-time academic training by internships and supervised practicums with public and private employers. It is also possible to draw students for advanced professional training from the ranks of middle-level technicians and paraprofessionals with relevant work experience. All these measures are likely to produce professionals better adapted to the development needs of South Asia.

Providing large public subsidies to higher education when a large proportion of children and youths do not have the benefit of basic primary education is incompatible with the welfare ethics and the social values professed by the South Asian nations. There is no strict formula for allocating public resources to different levels of education, but in all South Asian nations except Sri Lanka there is a case for shifting substantial amounts of resources from higher education to primary education, whether rate-of-return analysis supports such shift or not. (It so happens that such a shift is also supportable on economic grounds in many developing countries.)

A Positive Manpower Policy

The usual manpower estimates and the policies derived from them accept the existing patterns of employment, manpower utilization, and distribution of rewards for work, stressing ways and means of adjusting manpower supply to demand within the existing structure. A positive manpower policy, instead of passively accepting the present pattern and attempting to adjust to it, would emphasize specific programs and actions designed to ensure proper utilization of the human resources while removing gross socioeconomic inequity and establishing fair distribution of the rewards of work. Three specific actions are suggested as major ingredients of a positive manpower policy in South Asia.

Reduction of wage differentials. The differentials between wages, particularly between those for white-collar jobs and skilled workers' jobs and for professional positions and middle-level technician positions, need to be reduced. The average wage of top-ranking public-service jobs in South Asia is 15 to 20 times higher than that of the lowest ones. (In contrast, the differential is around 5:1 in industrialized countries. Reduction of wage differentials would be a disincentive for the demand for higher education generated by expectations of white-collar and professional jobs, would help establish the dignity of labor and attract young people to middle-level skills, and make at least a symbolic contribution toward building a more egalitarian society—symbolic because only a small portion of all workers are in the wage sector and the major source of income inequality in South Asia is not wage differentials but other income such as rent, dividends, interest, and profit.

The flood of applications that any white-collar vacancy draws in South Asia indicates that there should not be any insurmountable obstacle to this plan on purely economic grounds. The ILO employment mission in Sri Lanka, for example, found that arts graduates were willing to consider a job at half the current salary for university graduates in public service fixed on the basis of educational qualifications (ILO, 1971).

The ILO employment missions to Sri Lanka and Kenya recommend reduction in wage differentials. In the case of Sri Lanka it is proposed that wage reforms be introduced by offering a reduced youth-service pay scale for a period of five years graded by the age of the employee rather than by educational qualifications. For Kenya, the recommendation is to reduce salaries by 25 percent at entry points for five years, after which period salaries and entry criteria should no longer be determined by higher education qualifications.

Separating degrees from jobs. A systematic effort should be made to deemphasize formal educational qualifications as the criteria for recruitment in jobs. The public sector bears the major responsibility for placing a high premium on university degrees for recruitment, often specifying educational requirements wholly unrelated to the skills and competence needed to perform the designated tasks. The public sector also generally sets salary scales graded by educational qualifications and induces the private sector to do the same.

It is obviously difficult to implement a policy of disregarding educational attainment in job placement when there is an oversupply of highly qualified people. However, the escalation of demand for degrees is fueled by the overvaluation of degrees in employment. Therefore, changes must be made on both fronts, and the large public sectors employing a large portion of the educated workers in South Asia must take the lead in implementing this proposal.

The ILO mission to Sri Lanka suggests that one approach to separating higher education from jobs would be to recruit public servants at the level of clerks, with a general secondary education as the basic requirement, and to promote some on the basis of performance and ability to administrative and professional levels. Those promoted would have the opportunity to attend special job-related training courses. A similar approach can be followed in specialized fields such as teaching, engineering, and medicine, where initial recruitment may be as primary teachers, technicians, and medical assistants.

Whether lateral entry into high-level positions in public and private enterprises should be totally eliminated and what the loss of "new blood" would be are debatable and need careful consideration. However, internal promotion and staff development can be pursed more systematically and vigorously than they presently are in South Asia.

Partnership with employers. An important element of the positive manpower approach is close and systematic involvement of employers in both public and private sectors in establishing manpower development and utilization policies and programs. Trade associations, public corporations, major government departments, and the rural sector (represented by various cooperatives) must participate in determining the skill-development activities that various users of manpower can and do undertake and the specific ways in which government educational and training intervention can be best applied. This measure complements and reinforces the earlier proposal to shift the burden of vocational training from schools to employers.

Incentives and disincentives through taxes and tax credits, licensing, and other regulatory measures can be used to encourage private-sector employers to support skill-development programs. Specific manpower development and utilization provisions can be incorporated in agreements permitting external investment and economic ventures.

Similarly, an explicit manpower training and utilization plan that conforms to overall national manpower policies can be made a part of all development projects undertaken by the government.

Overall Developmental Strategy

In a general situation of low productivity, low earning and the lack of the basic amenities of life, it is unrealistic to think of alleviating these conditions only for youths. In South Asia, any real effort to improve the present prospects of youths must first attack rural poverty, improving the living condition of the poorest one third or more of the population for whom landlessness, absence of other opportunities for gainful employment, poverty, and lack of education coincide, and among whom are included the most underprivileged of the rural youths.

A development design aimed at providing basic needs will also create an environment conducive to effective educational and manpower measures and other programs already under way in South Asia. (Basic needs are defined in terms of availability and the notion of "minimum standard of living" for a particular society, and consist of consumption items such as food, housing, and clothing, and services such as water, health, sanitation and education. See Hopkins et al., 1976, pp. 9–37.) Important elements of a development strategy focused on basic needs in the South Asian context are noted below.

Economic redistribution. It is impossible to meet the basic needs of the people of South Asia by the end of this century without following a highly egalitarian economic distribution policy and an economic development pattern that concentrates on meeting the basic needs of the poor and accepts the need for changes in the pattern of production and investment. Mahbub ul Hag (1974, p. 79) says: "We have a number of case studies by now that show how illusory it was to hope that the fruits of growth could be redistributed without reorganizing the pattern of production and investment first. . . . In my own country, Pakistan, the very institutions we created for promoting faster growth and capital accumulation later frustrated all our attempts for better distribution and greater social justice." The design and implementation of a policy of redistribution with growth is the central theme of national and international economic development debate and is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is certainly not beyond human capacity to design and implement such a policy (Tinbergen and others, 1976; Chenery and others, 1974). What is needed first of all is national commitment to such a policy and the determination to pursue the path this policy dictates.

Labor-intensive agriculture. Agriculture is the dominant factor in the gross domestic product and employment in South Asia; thus all policies relating to agriculture are likely to have implications for poverty and employment generation. Policies regarding mechanization, pricing of agricultural commodities and inputs, new farming techniques with varying labor intensity, land reforms, and agricultural credit favoring small farmers and increasing labor use obviously are conducive to improving the economic situation of rural people, including youths (Shaw, 1970).

It is surprising how little systematic effort has been directed in South Asia to increasing labor intensity in agriculture. The myth that rural labor surplus siphoned off to urban industries is the mainspring of economic development still exists in these countries. The number of farm workers employed per unit of land in Japan and Taiwan is more than twice that of India and only slightly less than twice as great in Egypt. In addition, the average size of farms in Japan and Taiwan is smaller than in India, but grain produced per hectare is four to five times higher than in India (Mehta, 1976). Obviously, there are formidable institutional barriers to be overcome in implementing a program of bringing all the available human resources and the land resources to an optimally productive combination. The optimal use of rural manpower through agricultural activities should, therefore, become the basic criterion for the functioning and development of rural institutions such as the land-tenure system, extension service, system of credit and input supply, marketing and price structure, and dissemination of farm technology.

Labor-intensive industry. Industry is the leading growth sector in the economies of South Asia, and its importance increases as the structure of the economy shifts and the ratio of industrial production in the Gross Domestic Product (GDS) grows. However the modern, capital-intensive, high-technology industries create a relatively small amount of employment, using up large amounts of scarce capital, and often produce goods that are unrelated to satisfying the essential consumption needs of the people. The basic policy guidelines for industrial development, therefore, would be the maximum use of the most abundant production factor—that is, labor—and economizing on the capital resources. A policy package designed to achieve this goal may include various elements: an emphasis on small and medium-scale industries;[1] pricing capital at its scarcity value instead of artificially lowering its price through external assistance and government regulation; changing the composition of the industrial output basket to give greater weight to goods produced by labor-intensive technologies and goods needed to satisfy minimum consumption needs; establishing a complementary relationship between large, medium, and small industries; and devoting a greater effort to devising labor-intensive technologies.

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[1] It is reported that in India in 1968, the fixed capital per employee, on an average, in small-scale industrial units was 3,170 replies compared with 22,000 replies in a large-scale unit. The small-scale sector accounted for 7.5 percent of the total fixed capital investment in the factory sector, but its share in the total output was 28 percent (*Draft of the Fifth Five Year Plan, 1974–79*, p. 160).

Commitment to rural development. A development strategy oriented to basic needs in South Asia inevitably requires a genuine commitment to rural development and a high priority on improvement of living conditions of rural people. Rural development may be defined as a process of rural transformation that not only results in higher agricultural production but brings to rural people basic amenities of life such as adequate housing, essential health and educational facilities, clean water, roads, and electricity; gives them a voice in their own affairs; and offers work opportunities that pay a living wage to all. An all-out commitment to such a process implies a reorientation of national development goals and the transfer of real resources to rural areas on a much larger scale than at present.

Decentralization of development activities. National commitment to rural development cannot be translated into a uniform operational plan for a whole country because rural areas differ widely in their natural resource endowments and basic development potential, in their present stage of development and economic infrastructures, and in their readiness to advance further. A commitment to rapid rural transformation, therefore, calls for decentralized development planning and administration that allow each rural area to devise, within the national framework, its own development plan, adapted to its particular potentialities and constraints.

Programs for solving hardcore rural employment problems require the integration of various specific employment measures with comprehensive development programs for each area. A portfolio of rural works projects, small-scale and cottage industries, production/training programs in artisan and crafts skills, young farmers' or laborers' cooperatives, and so on are likely to be more effective if they are constituent parts of the comprehensive, locally managed development plan for a specific rural district. It would be then possible to give the works projects more than an ad hoc character, because successive local development plans can continue to devise projects with high social return and maintain a thread of continuity among them. Various production/training schemes would be adapted to local needs and would serve longer-range goals because follow-up and related future development activities would be in the hands of the local organizations.

Special programs for the disadvantaged. Given the framework of decentralized planning and management of development activities and a redirection of development investments toward the rural areas, a number of specific activities might create additional employment openings and contribute to the improvement of rural living conditions by mobilizing the most underutilized and economically disadvantaged segments of the working population: out-of-school youths, landless farmworkers, and women.

For example, the International Council for Educational Development (1976) recommends that young people from landless rural families in the 15 to 25 age group could be organized into young farmers' brigades for the purpose of collective farming and related production activities and to pursue education, health, and other self-help efforts. As a group they could secure land by lease or on a sharecropping basis. A total production plan for year-round optimal utilization of the total land area secured by the group could be made. The local extension agent and a youth-program officer recruited by the community development agency or the local government body could work closely with the brigades in preparing the production plan, seeking appropriate technical assistance from the extension service and other available sources. Special provisions for credit could be made through banks or from special credit funds to cover as much of the input costs (except labor) as needed to implement the production plan.

Once the brigades make some gains in their economic enterprises and win the confidence of their members and the communities, they could begin to arrange basic educational programs for interested and motivated members, and specially trained brigade members could serve as auxiliaries for their respective villages in the areas of health and family planning, disease prevention for livestock and poultry, fishery extension, and so forth. Special training for such activities could be provided by the regional and local personnel of different government departments or by arrangement with voluntary agencies with appropriate expertise. The educational and other service activities would be for the benefit of the whole village, though the collective production activities would be carried out by the brigade members.

Formation of youth production brigades will by no means be the total solution for the problem of disadvantaged rural youths but could improve the life prospects of at least a portion of the youths in areas where such organizations are formed and might even be the precursor of similar self-help organizations of youths and other disadvantaged groups.

Along the same lines as the young farmers' brigades, organizations could be formed for women and girls from low-income families. In the initial groups, emphasis could be given to specific ways of improving the economic condition of families—for example, by raising poultry, eggs, and vegetables; by sewing clothes for children; and by making handicrafts for sale. Again small amounts of credit could be made available for group and individual economic projects. Once the new organizations are fully active, they could be encouraged to take on other functions with respect to health, nutrition, family planning, child and maternal care, and children's and women's education. The use of community-based auxiliaries of government departments, under the supervision of local-level technical personnel, could be an important feature of such schemes.

The extent to which the approaches and activities suggested here are acceptable and feasible in the South Asian countries has not been considered. Resistance to change and maintenance of the status quo are, of course, components of underdevelopment, though knowing what changes to seek and how is no small puzzle.

No doubt all of the suggestions made here have been or will be vigorously resisted by some people. Every measure indicated will stir up controversy and will tread on vested interests of one kind or another. It is the coalition of vested interests in support of the status quo (or at least of minimal change) that appears to have the upper hand in South Asia.

The suggestions made above may be regarded as reformist rather than radical because they contain implicit consideration of the power of the forces of resistance and the need for minimizing social and private costs of change. Without these considerations, more drastic and revolutionary solutions could be conceived. The problems faced in South Asia have apparently been solved (or are at least being dealt with vigorously) nearby in the People's Republic of China. The task ahead with respect to overall development and the problems of youths within that context are of such magnitude that no less comprehensive a strategy can be contemplated if meaningful change without unacceptable high social costs is to be attained.

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